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Vulgarity in Literature, by Aldous Huxley, on page 158

# The Saturday Review of Literature

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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## Good Cheer for Readers

GRITTY soap will wash; weak soup can be eaten; a feeble car may nevertheless travel; but a poor book is worthless. It is worth nothing as waste paper; it cannot even be decently thrown away, for someone is sure to pick it up and return it. A really poor book is a sin against the human intelligence committed by a vain or ignorant author in connivance with a credulous publisher and a deluded bookseller. If a good book, as essayists are always telling us, is pure gold, a poor book is candy stuffed with sawdust. Both are priceless, for the first may be worth whatever can be paid for it, and the second is expensive at a cent.

These simple facts complicate the economics of the book trade. Are books too dear? We must answer, which books?—for poor books are always too dear. Are books to be cheaper? We urgently hope it, but with equal urgency ask, which books?—for a reduction in price which would put out of publication the kind of books intelligent readers most want, would be a disaster.

And indeed while we welcome every attempt to improve and increase distribution—which is the great American problem for sellers of books—and welcome, too, every ingenuity that makes it possible to buy more books for less money, nevertheless the depression in the book trade of the past six months seems to us to have been not more than half due to the economics of high costs in hard times. Books should suffer less than other commodities in periods of financial depression, because in such times there is more leisure for reading and more need of distraction. Yet the book trade this year has suffered at least as much as other businesses, except those concerned with pure luxuries.

* * *

A possible reason has already been suggested in these columns, and now it may be coupled with a probable cure. The Fall of 1929 and the Spring of 1930 will long deserve a bad eminence for their overproduction of mediocre books. There were more poor books (not "bad" in the moral sense, or inane, or false, or foolish—but weak, dull, second hand, muddy)—more poor books published than in the memory of living readers. They flooded shelves, and were remaindered almost as soon as they were reviewed, spilling over into drug stores and rented shop windows. They dazed booksellers, dulled critics, and sent advertising copy writers to the dictionaries in search of new adjectives to describe old stories tiresomely repeated. "Blurbing" last year reached its height for all time, the evident reason being that these geese had to be sold as swans, or not at all. And the public, big and little, were confused by an avalanche in which they could find when the dust settled very little that they wanted.

It was an accident, an unfortunate accident, for booksellers, publishers, and authors, that this decline in creative energy should have coincided with economic depression. It was not an accident that overproduction of mediocrity should have preceded it.

How the various price readjustments put into effect last Spring are going to work out, it is still too early to tell. Some seem wise, some experimental. But it is not too early to repeat that price is not the only factor. Unless the public can be interested in books, excited about books, price changes will be of little help. Books—old and new—are sold by talk about them, and they are sold to purchasers who can put their hands on them readily. These two factors—desire and distribution—are the magic num-

(*Continued on page* 159)

## *Montauk*

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

DROWSING in sun beside the summer sea,
Blinking with shaded eyes at bright eternity,
There, as I shift my hand,
Waves, and the sand,
Waves that renew
Their baffled valiance from the glittering blue
And cataract following cataract storm the land.

Life of the mind, interior flame and storm,
Now lulled and conquered, here the sun is warm,
All strife is idle save
Strife of the wave,
All consciousness
Less than the sullen tide's unconscious stress
Drawing the deep,—no comfort left to crave.

The heart beats slow, the passionate blood is still.
Marshalling from the past confusion to the will,
No memories now; and vain
Each voice of pain,
Silenced by trance
As life is sundered from significance.
Only the sea and sun and sky remain.

Nor seems there Time; this wide abyss of light
Fain would deny some dream of utter outer night.
The blind toil of the sea
Echoingly
Sounds down the land;
The bright high sun, burning on endless sand,
Shines with a like profound futility.

### *This Week*

"The Federal Reserve System."
Reviewed by RUSSELL LEFFINGWELL.

"Memoirs of an Infantry Officer."
Reviewed by STANLEY WENT.

"Soldiers March."
Reviewed by EMERSON TAYLOR.

"Journal of Things Old and New."
Reviewed by HARRY WALCOTT BOYNTON.

"Archibald."
Reviewed by CHARLES H. DENHARD.

"The Big Barn."
Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS.

"Brusski."
Reviewed by NICHOLAS SERGIEVSKY.

"The Street of the Islands."
Reviewed by ELLEN GLASGOW.

"The Tides of Malvern."
Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS.

"Unafraid."
Reviewed by STANLEY T. WILLIAMS.

### *Next Week, or Later*

Thoughts in a Notebook.
By H. A. L. FISHER.

## Reserve Banks & the Future

By RUSSELL LEFFINGWELL
Former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury

THE long controversy about the paternity of the Federal Reserve Act, testifies to the usefulness of the Act. The marvel is not that we have the Federal Reserve Act, but that we did without it so long. But the national bank act had, since the Civil War, provided a market for government bonds and a uniform currency. Those who remember the chaos that preceded it were content to let it alone. And all friends of sound money in the later 'nineties and early nineteen hundreds were too busy fighting against free silver to give much thought to the urgent need of currency reform. But the panic of 1907 opened men's minds and Mr. Paul Warburg, author of "The Federal Reserve System,"* as appears from his papers therein collected, did yeoman's service in preaching the doctrines and practices of modern European banking and currency. These conceptions found expression in a bill introduced in Congress by Senator Aldrich when the Taft administration was on its last legs. After Wilson's election the Aldrich scheme for a central bank with regional branches was modified by the Democrats and on the whole improved (because made more elastic) so as to provide for autonomous regional banks grouped together under, and more or less controlled by, a politically appointed central board.

The problem was not to invent a currency system but to adapt the modern European system to American conditions, traditions, and inhibitions. For that successful adaptation history must give great credit to President Wilson who put his power and prestige behind the bill at the outset of his administration; and to Carter Glass, that lion-hearted Virginian, much loved and feared and revered, who fathered the bill in the House, and who has defended the System ever since in the House, the Treasury, and the Senate. Credit should be given, too, to Secretaries McAdoo and Houston of Wilson's cabinet; to Benjamin Strong, first Governor of the New York Reserve Bank, who led the System during its first fourteen years; and to the author of these volumes who not only taught sound principles of banking and currency reform, but also, as a member of the first Federal Reserve Board and its second Vice Governor, rendered inestimable service to the Federal Reserve System and the Treasury in the War; and to many others who collaborated in the great work.

* * *

There is credit enough to go around. The infant Federal Reserve System met the exigencies of the greatest war. Just as soon as the Treasury's war necessities had ceased to dominate the situation, the Federal Reserve System, by vigorous application of the classical remedy of dear money effected in 1920, promptly and without panic, though not without pain, the inevitable post-war deflation.

Thereafter and until three years ago the System functioned to the satisfaction of all. During this period business in this country was good, commodity prices were fairly stable, though slowly sinking elsewhere, and the speculation in stocks, though it gave concern to the thoughtful, had not yet got out of bounds. Certain European critics, to be sure, complained of what they called the sterilization of gold here, but they were seemingly unaware of the vast

* THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM, ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH, REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS. By PAUL M. WARBURG. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1930. 2 vols. $18.

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super-structure of deposits which the independent banks were erecting on the base provided by the Federal Reserve System's gold holdings. Far from being sterile, the gold increased and multiplied itself in bank credit, which grew immensely in volume and velocity.

In the last half of 1927 an active cheap money policy was embarked upon by the Federal Reserve System, in a thoughtful and statesmanlike, though hazardous, effort to neutralize the gold absorption by France which followed the return of confidence there with the return of Poincaré, and to prevent a world-wide deflation of prices. Unhappily, unavoidably, this cheap money was quickly diverted to the uses of inflation particularly in stocks. The steps taken to check this inflation in 1928 proved inadequate, and when, at the beginning of 1929, the chief Federal Reserve Banks, then thoroughly aroused, sought to invoke the classical remedy of dear money, their proposed increases in rates were vetoed by the Federal Reserve Board in Washington. The Board hoped, by admonition and by discrimination against banks making loans on collateral securities, to control the inflation which had become rampant, without making money dear for commerce, industry, and agriculture.

But the inflation in stocks was merely the reflection of inflation in business, in production, and in consumption and a cheap money policy intended to continue the business boom was not well calculated to discourage the purchase of stocks.

This well-meant effort to keep money cheap and plentiful and yet control its use was foredoomed to failure. It was responsible for the frenzied bull market of the first eight or nine months of 1929 and for the resultant crash in October and November.

Money and credit are like the rain from heaven. They fall equally upon the just and the unjust. And it is fortunate that it is so; for, it would be intolerable to a liberty loving people that a board, however wise and disinterested, should determine which among their fellow citizens is entitled to borrow money at his bank for lawful purposes on ample security and which is not. The Federal Reserve System can

decree a feast or a famine but it cannot say ... shall gorge at the feast or starve in the famine.

When the crash came the Federal Reserve Bank of New York functioned perfectly. It helped prevent the stock market panic from spreading and removed any chance of a money or banking panic by making and keeping money easy. Without this relief from the Reserve Bank, the action taken by the New York banking group to keep the market open could scarcely have succeeded. It would be difficult to praise too highly the vigorous and statesmanlike action of the Reserve Bank at that time—or to improve upon the policies the System has pursued since.

* * *

These volumes are a mine of information for the student of recent economic history. Only the student will interest himself in the author's controversy with Senator Glass, or in the reprinted documents, essays, and addresses which occupy nearly half of his first volume and quite the whole of his second, though the admirable papers reprinted at the beginning of the second volume comparing the European banking machinery and money markets with our own before the establishment of the Federal Reserve System will well repay reading even now.

The general reader will turn to the chapter entitled "Looking Forward" and the paper on the Stock Exchange crisis of 1929 for the author's constructive suggestions.

One interesting suggestion is to substitute the Under-secretary for the Secretary of the Treasury as a member of the Federal Reserve Board. But our Secretaries of the Treasury have stood well in public estimation. The purpose of subjecting the operations of the Reserve Banks to the control of a Board in Washington, all the members of which are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, was to insure to the public protection against possible abuse of power in the private interest by the regional Reserve Banks. Perhaps it is just as well that two members of the Board are members of the administration in power, and thus may be considered to have had a fresh popular mandate, and that one of them is the second ranking member of the cabinet and the chief fiscal officer of the Government. Neither the Reserve Banks, nor the Board, if it were to become wholly bureaucratic rather than political, could count on freedom from political interference. No group of men however wise or competent will ever be suffered to have such vast powers free from popular control. It is the great merit of the Federal Reserve Act that it provides in the Federal Reserve Board the machinery for giving effect to the popular will. Without it that will might before this have found expression more roughly still in radical amendment or even in repeal.

* * *

Other interesting suggestions are here made concerning the organization of the Federal Reserve Board. But the chances are that progress will be made, not by tinkering with the Act, but, first and foremost, by concentrating attention on the quality of appointments to the Board when vacancies arise, to insure that appointees shall be not only men of character but also men of understanding in banking and finance. They should be men not less responsive to the popular will but more expert in giving it expression. The people do not want bad money nor economic crisis.

Second, the Washington Board would do well to consider giving the twelve great regional banks a greater measure of autonomy in the management of their business. Congress, in passing the Federal Reserve Act, definitely determined to have a coördinated system of autonomous regional banks, and not to have a central bank. If the Washington Board is to manage the regional banks then it becomes a sort of central bank, without adequate powers or machinery, operating many branches. That is just what Congress, in rejecting the Aldrich Bill and adopting the Owen-Glass Bill, decided not to have. The power of the regional banks to operate autonomously must of course include the power customarily to fix their own rates and their own open market policies. The power of review and determination which the Washington Board has should ordinarily be used to coördinate but not to reverse the policies of the regional banks.

The third great reform which seems desirable is the reform of our money market. The Reserve Banks must have the power to make their rates effective. Though the Federal Reserve System has promptly responsive to moderate changes in Federal Reserve policy. Lacking such drastic action, the stock market and the call money market, rather than the Federal Reserve System, dominated the money markets and the international exchanges from the end of 1927 until the latter part of 1929.

* * *

The author of these volumes has presented from the outset the orthodox view that the remedy should be found in the substitution of term settlements for daily settlements on the stock exchange, and in the development of a bill market. Curiously enough, as the author pointed out thirteen years ago, the New York law preserves the archaic statutes against usury in the case of time loans, while repealing them in the case of call loans. It may be that the repeal of the ursury law in the case of time loans would help some. It might be worth while then for the Stock Exchange to make cautious experimental steps towards the substitution of term settlements for daily settlements for stocks.

The author at the outset of his studies pointed out the importance of creating a bill market here. Since then every effort has been made to acclimate in this country the bills of exchange and bankers acceptances with which Europe is familiar, instead of the native commercial paper. An immense volume of bankers acceptances has been created. But nothing approaching a substitute for the call money market on stocks, either in volume or activity, has been built up. The Federal Reserve Banks could call acceptances into being by buying them at preferential low rates, and could create a special market for them by granting them special tax exemption, but these low rates were often unattractive to the generality of banks and investors and they could not participate in the special tax exemptions granted to the foreign central banks. Rather than extend the special tax exemption granted these bills as the author suggests, it would seem better for the Board to simplify its eligibility rules and for the Reserve Banks to make it a practice in future to fix their rate for advances to member banks appreciably higher than heretofre in relation to their buying rate for bills, with a view to having their dealings ordinarily with the bill market rather than in the form of direct advances to member banks.

These and many other interesting questions concern the student of Federal Reserve policy and central bank policy everywhere. No future student of these subjects can afford to disregard these volumes which carry the weight of their distinguished author's thorough theoretical grasp and practical experience of monetary and banking problems.

# Even Here Is Beauty

MEMOIRS OF A INFANTRY OFFICER. By SIEGFRIED SASSOON. New York: Coward-McCann. 1930. $2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY WENT

FINISHING this volume one feels that one could be well content to let it stand at the finish of one's reading of the present phase of war literature. If it had been published at the beginning of the flood of war books it would have sprung into immediate importance because of the freshness of its revelation of how a man of fine and sensitive intelligence, with the soul of a poet and the upbringing of an English country gentleman, reacted to his experiences in the trenches. In the light of other war books, however, one knows, by and large, just about what the reaction of such a man is likely to have been. Indeed, on the basis of the war books published in the last few years a psychologist could make a pretty complete classification of the different ways in which different temperaments may be expected to react, after a lapse of time, to their war experiences. Hence there is and could be nothing startlingly new or original in the matter of this volume.

It is, however, a book of the first importance not so much on account of what it says as on account of the way in which the author says it. For this reason it will not disappoint, even though it may not entirely fulfil, the high expectations of it aroused by the author's poems and by his previous "Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man." Certainly it is a joy to read this limpid style, a prose that is nervous and virile, but the prose of a poet, with balance and rhythm and a just selection of every epithet.

As in the earlier volume, Mr. Sassoon maintains the fiction of fiction, that is, his hero is very transthe narration of events and in the psychological reaction to them of a particular type of character which everybody knows is the poet Siegfried Sassoon, though it may at times be a Sassoon raised to the *nth* degree. Thus the very interesting climax, where the teller of the story, in the reaction of wearied disillusionment and physical exhaustion, presents to his colonel a flagrant anti-war statement and demands arrest, is entirely consistent with the Siegfried *motif* (if one may be pardoned the obvious but appropriate play), though evidently it is not autobiographical.

The period of the story is from the spring of 1916 to the summer of 1917, and it covers, therefore, the Somme battles and some of the bloodiest fighting on the Western Front. But this is no record of military events, even though the descriptions of such events, as, for instance, the account of a raid on German trenches, are among the most vivid and faithful that have been produced. The events themselves are only the background against which the author shows a series of pictures displaying the thoughts and emotions of the men taking part. And Sassoon is an artist. He can paint the horrors of war without making a horrible picture; he can paint the filth of war without being filthy; he can even paint the bestiality of war without making his characters bestial. This quality of artistic restraint distinguishes the present volume from such outstanding war books as "All Quiet on the Western Front." Here, for instance, is a characteristic passage describing the author's sensations as he went down the line on an ambulance train after being wounded.

> The Front Line was behind us; but it could lay its hand on our hearts, though its bludgeoning reality diminished with every mile. It was as if we were pursued by the Arras Battle which had now become a huge and horrible idea. We might be boastful or sagely reconstructive about our experience, in accordance with our different characters. But our ininds were still out of breath and our inmost thoughts in disorderly retreat from bellowing darkness and men dying out in shell-holes under the desolation of returning daylight. We were the survivors; few among us would ever tell the truth to our friends and relations in England. We were carrying something in our heads which belonged to us alone, and to those we had left behind us in the battle.

O again a little later:

> But I was rewarded by an intense memory of men whose courage had shown me the power of the human spirit—that

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spirit which could withstand the utmost assault. Such men had inspired me to be at my best when things were very bad, and they outweighed all the failures. Against the background of the War and its brutal stupidity those men had stood glorified by the thing which sought to destroy them. . . .

Above all through this story of successive moods, which run the gamut of every emotion from the half-humorous heroics at the beginning to the almost ridiculous anti-climax at the end, there runs a constant *motif*, the author's love of nature and especially of the English countryside. Only a poet would think of thus describing the battalion's evacuation of a rest camp:

> The aspens by the river were shivering and showing the whites of their leaves, and it was goodbye to their cool, showery sound when we marched away in our own dust at four o'clock on a glaring, bright afternoon. The aspens waited, with their indifferent welcome, for some other dead-beat and diminished battalion. Such was their habit, and so the war went on.

And always, whether courting sleep in a dugout on the Somme, or waiting on the firestep for zero hour, or out in No Man's Land cutting the enemy wire, his thoughts wing their way like homing pigeons back to England, to the Sussex countryside and the Sussex characters, to the loved music of the hounds, and the feel of a horse galloping on English turf.

This is a remarkable book, as remarkable in its way as "Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man," though it necessarily lacks the illusive charm of that volume. At any rate, the present reviewer, having dealt with many war books, would be quite content to say his "Nunc dimittis" with this one.

## First Class Fighting Men

SOLDIERS MARCH. By THEODORE FREDENBURGH. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company. 1930. $2.

Reviewed by EMERSON TAYLOR

THIS vivid account of events in the crowded life of a First Sergeant in a combat regiment of American field artillery in France combines brilliant objective reporting with sensitive character drawing. Here are the laboring gunners; with them the reader crouches at the smoking "seventy-fives" in the forward battery positions; with them he suffers and endures on gruelling march or in rain-slashed bivouac; throughout the book he hears and smells real American soldiers—those tireless, humorous, cracky, half-disciplined, prejudiced, courageous, gorgeous Yanks, despair of the martinet and drill-book theorist, joy of the seasoned leader of men in battle. The picture of a young idealist developed by his responsibilities into a hardbitten, vigorous non-com, is drawn with full knowledge, insight, and sympathy—as are, indeed, the full-bodied sketches of Sergeant Zorn's companions. One feels in them an echo of the author's poignant personal experience. And the larger background against which these strongly lighted figures are projected is extraordinarily rich.

It is the record, no less, of the 101st Field Artillery, 26th Division, than which no better ever went into action on the western front; and Mr. Fredenburgh is most successful in evoking, without heroics or "sob-stuff," that remarkable division's every march, struggle, disappointment, and successful combat save its final engagement in the infernal crater of Verdun. Entering the front lines on the Chemin des Dames in February, 1918, sustaining at Seicheprey, in April, the first heavy organized assault of the Germans against American troops, the 26th Division as a whole participated thereafter in every major action of the A. E. F., being exposed to or suffering from enemy fire for nine months daily until Armistice, save for two meager weeks of rest. And if the infantry of the Twenty-Sixth worked hard, its magnificent artillery may be credited with an even longer employment, supporting as it did two other divisions in succession, when the battered infantry was relieved after its fifteen kilometer advance against heavy opposition, through the bloody wheatfields above Chateau Thierry.

From this prolonged experience of warfare, the author has garnered a glowing harvest of reminiscence. Not one of the many books about the American fighting-man in France, which have come to the notice of this reviewer, can even approch "Soldiers March" in truth, just appraisal, unforced dramatic interest, or skilful characterization. Bared clean are the virtues and weaknesses, the oddities, enthusiasms, and prejudices of the A. E. F.'s seasoned combat troops. To round out his picture, the author does not hesitate to recall certain feelings in the breasts of these warriors of which the official accounts make no record, but which were oftentimes animating springs of action—the abiding mutual distrust of the Regular and National Guard organizations, the scorn which the volunteers felt for the drafted troops, the pride in their status as veterans which lifted the hearts of the original First Corps units (the 1st, 2d, 26th, and 42d Divisions), the grim laughter of combat soldiers for the safe and lucky who lived out the war many miles from the sound of hostile gunfire. To read Mr. Fredenburgh's pages is to talk over old times with a former comrade-in-arms. His book is a valuable study of the men who composed a representative fighting regiment of the American Expeditionary Force.

## Fishing for Mummychogs

JOURNAL OF THINGS NEW AND OLD. By ARNOLD BENNETT. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1930. $2.

Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

ARNOLD Bennett's American publishers say that "tucked away in a section of his library at Cadogan Square are countless small thin paper, leather bound books which contain in Bennett's inimitably fine caligraphy a record of the important happenings in his life. Some day he may edit and publish the diaries in full." We shouldn't put it past him. When a man learns to write twenty-four hours a day, he condemns himself to be a sort of recording machine. No phase of experience really

Illustration from "Treatise on the Power and Utility of Moneys," by Gabriel Biel (University of Pennsylvania Press).

exists for him till he has got it down, however briefly, in black and white. The record is what completes and verifies the experience. The recorder becomes a sort of victim or addict of this calling. This may be unavoidable, but it is also undesirable. Is a writer who cannot forget his job more to be admired than a business man ditto? The compulsion in a case like Bennett's is not a compulsion of genius. Genius he has, but this scribbling habit has nothing to do with it. Pathetic, this eternal fiddling with a pen by professional writers. Like the spectacle of a mighty fishermen, home from his tarpon, fishing for mummychogs in a puddle with a bent pin.

If the present fragments are a select sample of the contents of the "countless" little diaries that lurk on Bennett's shelves, I for one don't look forward with enthusiasm to their publication in full. These are pin feathers from the eagle's wing. The publisher discovers Pepysian merit in them, but they are not sufficiently unselfconscious for that. They are notes by a clever observer who is also, by trade, a searcher for copy. Anything that comes to him in the business of living may be useful in the business of writing for publication. As for Pepys, everything that happened enchanted him on its own account. Everything that happens to Bennett is noted and placed on file: you never can tell what may come in handy later on.

And much of it, to judge from these (I suppose) carefully chosen samples, is trivial, no matter who wrote it. Arnold Bennett buying evening waistcoats is like any other man doing the same thing—unless he takes us into the secret of his taste for that commodity. And what is there to distinguish an entry like this?"

> *"London, February 14th.*
> Something I have never seen before: the channel boat covered from stem to stern with snow and ice. Icicles hanging at every point that an icicle could possibly start from. Big icicles—Regular stalactites."

As for any new light on Bennett himself, I don't find it here. All of his fiction, you may say, is a note on himself, and these entries merely repeat his findings, echo his indulgent acceptance of life as a quaint medley of generous impulses, selfish second thoughts, petty vanities, broken toys, valorous adjustments, moments of ecstasy, and hapless dissolution. All this he finds in his own experience and nature; the diarist is now his own Clayhanger. It amuses him to set down his own trivialities and inconsistencies, the earthy desires and the tiny egotisms that lurk in the bosom of the famous author. One of his favorite themes as novel-writer (favorite, too, with his chief contemporaries, Barrie and Wells and Shaw) is the private fallibility and childishness of your great man.

How is it that Bennett maintains his ardent interest in this quaint but limited spectacle? The charm of human inconsistency and incongruity never palls for him. You recall that favorite mannerism of his, the "Strange man!" or "Mysterious creature!" with which he underlines some sudden brutality of the male or piquancy of the female. It is not an affectation, it expresses his normal attitude of pleased wonder towards the human spectacle, including himself. It is endlessly funny, that spectacle, he wonders what it is about—he gives it up!

So at the end of one of these diary entries: "Mysterious existence of these eccentric self-exiled English! But not more mysterious than the existence of anybody else."

After all, what is this but a sentimental begging of the question, quite in the Victorian manner. "I fancy one would not have been too happy there," says the author of the "Virginians," near the beginning of that work: "Happy, who is happy? Was there not a serpent in Paradise itself, and if Eve had been perfectly happy beforehand, would she have listened to him?"

To me by far the most valuable among these notes are the entries in which Bennett the man of talent reports certain observations on Bennett the man of genius in process of getting a new major work under way. The idea has been in his mind for years, but he has been unable to find the mood for its execution. Suddenly one day the creative impulse stirs in him. He tends it anxiously. Certain surroundings, certain books, certain music feed the flame. Or he goes to a fine show of paintings: "An artist engaged on a work ought never to read or see or hear second-class stuff. If he does, he sees the resemblance between his work and this second class; and is discouraged. Whereas if he sticks to first class stuff, he realizes the resemblances between his world and it, and is enheartened thereby."

Now (in the diary) he is planning a long novel, the first one in many years. He dreads it in a way—a short novel is easier, there is less danger of losing the creative mood before it is done. The man who fails to hold his mood to the end of a long novel "has been guilty of only one artistic sin, the sin of miscalculating his creative strength."

Now as he sets forth, the creative Bennett knows just what is before him—900 pages of manuscript, 150,000 words. In the same way he knew beforehand the shape and size of "The Old Wives' Tale." Another mystery! This novel, we gather, is to centre in the life of a great hotel; to deal exhaustively with a theme once touched offhand in "The Grand Babylon Hotel"—"a mere lark." But he sees the big *hotel de luxe* as a big theme for a serious novel. The idea thrills him, but the process—how he dreads it! "Today I wrote three pages. 897 left to do! The thought is terrifying."

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"The *Vossische Zeitung*" says the *Manchester Guardian*, "has begun the publication of passages from the memoirs of the late Herr von Bülow, the former German Imperial Chancellor. The complete memoirs will be published in four volumes later on. They are about a million words in length, and cover the whole career of the leading statesman of Wilhelmian Germany. They are an extraordinarily faithful mirror of the epoch. Not that they are honest; on the contray, they are a monument of smug insincerity, boastfulness, and pretence. But that is precisely why they reflect the age."

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# A Modern Phenomenon

ARCHIBALD. By FREDERICK MARKHAM. New York: Brewer & Warren. 1930. $2.

Reviewed by CHARLES H. DENHARD

"ARCHIBALD" is the story of the rise to a peerage of a vulgar little swine who beat the drum successively in the Salvation Army, the theatre, and finally in the Big Business of London. Salvos of acclaim from Arnold Bennett and Frank Swinnerton greeted its appearance abroad. Here is what an advertising man thinks of advertising men—or more accurately, perhaps, what one clever, cynical, and accomplished advertising man (the author writes under a *nom de plume*) thinks of other advertising men.

Archibald Piper, out of nowhere, without background, brains, or money advertised himself with astonishing success. His two most valuable assets were a colossal gall and an utter indifference to derision. When he was engaged to publicize Rendell's, the great London department store, his employers and his associates held him in contempt while utilizing his brass for the good of their coffers.

His success, as such, was simply a matter of achieving his material desires. Even his love affairs were warped and contorted and made sordid to contribute to his personal gain.

Archibald, as an individual, provides an interesting study—caustic, biting, perhaps a trifle overdone. As a type, he is common to all fields of human endeavor. His characteristics are precisely those of any other insensitive, coarse, dynamic showman. If Mr. Markham feels that Archibald is peculiarly the product of the advertising business, he is narrowing the possible range of interest in his creation. If all advertising men were like Archibald the world would arise in great wrath and smite the breed.

The book can be read with enjoyment, for it is not without humor, incident, and the suspense of a first rate, workmanlike novel. While the reader will feel little sympathy for Archibald, the fantastic career of this modern phenomenon is extremely diverting, while three or four minor characters, notably "E. M.," the general manager of Rendell's, Ltd., and Armstrong, Archibald's associate, prevent the book from being an out and out crucifixion of a bounder.

The irony of Archibald's success—for he did succeed—is tempered by Mr. Markham's ingenious ending. For the first time in his life, Archibald, Lord Piper, felt that the fates had been cruel to him. Yet the reader is sanguine that somehow Archibald will twist the thing, cataclysmic as it seems, to his advantage.

# An Up State Story

THE BIG BARN. By WALTER D. EDMONDS. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1930. $2.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. EDMONDS, who gave us an excellent picture of the early days of the Erie Canal in "Rome Haul," now follows it with a study of life in nothern New York—in the Black River valley, between the St. Lawrence and Mohawk—two decades later, or just before the Civil War. The materials for this story are less picturesque and extensive than those of his remarkable first novel. Instead of canal hands, teamsters, emigrants, and refugees from justice on the bustling new waterway, he presents simply a rather quiet group of farm people: a masterful old landowner named Ralph Wilder, his two sons, his daughter-in-law, his tenants, and his farm-hands. There is a difference also in the construction of the book. Instead of a loose plot, lacking in complications but full of adventure and incident, the author presents two triangles of a desperately serious kind, overlapping one another. The younger Bascom son, an attractive rural Don Juan, carries on dangerous love affairs with the wife of a tenant and with the wife of his own brother. It is a more tightly woven story, which reaches its bloody climax just on the eve of the Civil War. With fewer advantages of background and plot than in his first novel, Mr. Edmonds has produced a book which will doubtless be less popular, but which is just as interesting and which marks an advance in some essential elements of fiction.

Most of all it marks an advance in power of characterization. "Rome Haul" was a novel of scene and atmosphere; "The Big Barn" is a novel of people. In Ralph Wlder, the rather grim and altogether powerful old man who has built up a great landed estate and rules his community with an iron hand, in his son Bascom Wilder, a big, handsome man with the same power, the same streak of brutality, and an unfortunate eye for women, and in the daughter-in-law Rose, who is the keen-eyed observer of the whole tale, the author gives us three sharply conceived and vigorously presented personages. It is the old man who is the hero of the story, and the big barn that he builds as the last great work of his lifetime helps him to dominate the tale. There is enough action and there is enough realistic background of rural scenes and occupations to save the novel from any charge of thinness. We understand and sympathize with the old man in all that he says and does, but the same sympathy does not extend to his wild son. When this predatory Bascom Wilders is at last caught by the tenant whose wife he has led astray, and his efforts to escape are stopped by a shotgun, the reader feels he has received his proper reward. His unhappy end paves the way to a happy ending for the remainder of the family, and most of all for Rose. While the big barn was going up, the solidarity of the family was being threatened by the efforts of Bascom to rob his brother of his wife; but when it is at last completed, the family is safe.

There is less of the color of history in this book than in its predecessor, less adventure, and less pungent and idiomatic talk. But if it is not so notable as a period study, in some respects it encourages us to think more highly of Mr. Edmonds's gifts.

# Rural Soviet Russia

BRUSSKI. A Story of Peasant Life in Soviet Russia. By F. PANFEROV. Translated from the Russian by Z. Mitrov and J. Tabrisky. New York: International Publishers. 1930. $2.50.

Reviewed by NICHOLAS SERGIEVSKY

AS a main feature of the "five year plan" of reconstructing the whole of the Soviet country, the Russian village, which occupies a most important place in its economic life, is undergoing a drastic process of communization. This collectivization of the Russian village is the subject of Mr. Panferov's book and a favorite theme of communist authors writing about rural life.

"Brusski" is the name of an extensive plot of land by the Volga River, near the village of Shirokoye. For years the local landlord horded it in sterility. After the revolution it passed into the possession of the village community. Old Egor Chukliav, a "kulak" (literally "fist"), as rich peasants who exploit poorer ones are called, has long cast a covetous eye on Brusski and is about to rent it when Stepan Ognev, a newcomer in the village and an ardent worshipper of the communist ideology, organizes a fellowship among the landless peasants of Shirkoye and prevails on the community to give them Brusski to be worked on a coöperative basis. Chukliav's son Yashka, who falls in love with Ognev's daughter Stesha and marries her against his father's will, turns communist and joins the fellowship.

After two or three years of persistent labor the ground of Brusski is well tilled and promises a good crop. Then a lasting drought threatens to ruin the crops of the fellowship and the villagers. Maddened by the fear of famine, the village women induce their husbands to go about the fields in a procession with the priest Kharlampy to pray for rain. Zhdarkin, the bolshevik chairman of the village and a former member of the Red army (a favorite type in Soviet literature, always portrayed as a most important factor in changing village life along cultural lines), gets the priest drunk. Kharlampy is brought at Zhdarkin's command into the church in a cart hitched to a camel and drops at the altar rail. A loathsome scene ensues.

Instead of hearing mass, the bewildered congregation is ordered to attend a meeting called by Zhdarkin. There Ognev proposes to irrigate the fields by building a dam over the local river as the only sensible means of fighting the drought. The peasants, frightened by the danger of starvation, agree to work in coöperation with Ognev's fellowship. Within three weeks the dam is ready. It is a solemn moment when Ognev closes the last sluice-gate and the water rushes into a channel dug around the fields. "Here it is—collective labor," he murmurs in a quivering voice. "If we set our minds to it we could move mountains."

The occasion is marred by a bloody fracas, caused by several peasants attempting to misuse the water for irrigating their allotments to the detriment of their neighbors. Ognev is dangerously wounded. Chukliav taunts his fallen enemy. "See, they've put an end to you—you strangers." In a faint whisper Ognev answers: "You're a child. If I'm not here, there'll always be enough of us to carry on. Our family is big. But you are only a day laborer. Where is your immortality?"

Here the book ends. As a piece of clever propaganda the story probably proved a great success in Soviet Russia. From a literary point of view it is open to criticism. The thematic struggle of a group of pioneers in cultivating the wild land of Brusski is not worked out with sufficient persuasiveness. Occasionally we see the men at work on the land, but the actual feel of their gigantic task is not conveyed to the reader as in some American pioneer stories. The lengthy novel, divided into "links" and subdivided into numerous paragraphs, lacks a continuous well developed plot of rising interest. Instead, we have a jumble of unimportant episodes and happenings, in which secondary characters, all more or less alike, talk as average, middle-class people of any country might, but in a way which Russian peasants never use. Possibly the translation, imported from Soviet Russia, as we learn from the publisher's blurb on the jacket, should be called to account for the deficiencies of the style. For it cannot boast of being excellent.

* * *

Nevertheless the book may be of interest to the foreign reader who has little or no knowledge of present-day rural Russia where the experiment of collectivization is going on at full speed. He who plods through the first part of the story will find in its latter part a few well-written pages skilfully enough portraying main characters and vividly depicting several striking scenes. Among these the description of the arrival of the first tractor in the backward country constitutes a real hymn to the American tractor. The peasants, as they see the huge machine, which they feel sure will instantly sink into the soft ground of the field, jeer in derision. Afterward they make several unsuccessful stealthy attempts to wreck the engine, and finally are bewildered at seeing the marvelous "dragter" at work. There are also vivid pictures of the drought and later of the exultation of the peasants at seeing the water flood their fields and bring new life to their wilted crops. True family bliss is portrayed in the happiest home in the village, that of the new communist convert, Yashka Chukliav, who tenderly loves his wife Stesha and their baby daughter, born "in accordance with the Soviet fashion" within six months after their marriage.

These glimpses of Yasha's family, with others of like character in recent Soviet literature, seem of considerable import. They suggest that the country is beginning to be regenerated after the turmoil of impudent license into which it was thrown by the revolution and that the urge for clean family life, on which the moral welfare of a state is founded, seems to be taking a firm hold of the newer generation of Russian people.

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The Macmillan Company, who have for some years been the American agents for Cambridge books, will establish in January a Cambridge University department in their New York office. This department will be under the charge of Mr. F. R. Mansbridge, formerly scholar of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. For the last two years Mr. Mansbridge has been an Instructor in English at Barnard College and has lately worked at both the Cambridge and London offices of the University Press in England.

**The Saturday Review of Literature**

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# Art That Has Roots

THE STREET OF THE ISLANDS. By STARK YOUNG. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1930. $2.50.

Reviewed by ELLEN GLASGOW

AS I finished this book I thought, "here is art that has roots."

In much modern prose, even the finest, there is a suggestion of those Japanese flowers that are rooted in no element more stable than water; but in the writing of Stark Young I never lose the feeling of solid substance, of clinging tendrils and rich, dark soil, beneath. I am brought back again and again to the truth that life as a sum and a whole reaches far below the fragmentary surface we call human experience. "And yet," I continued, still musing, "it is doubtful if an American reader who was not cradled in elegiac memories would recognize this understanding of the heart which is older and deeper than the bright competence of the mind that distinguishes the best American fiction. Much as the modern American needs interpretative writing like this, it is probable, if not certain, that the brisk readers of the machine age, who have as little use for contemplation as they have for repose, will speed by to the noisier and easier conquest of facts."

For these stories have a rare quality; and many American readers, especially when they are reviewers of books also, are offended by quality. An influential body, indeed, has come to regard quality as un-American in manner, if not secretly depraved in purpose, dangerous alike to the simple vulgarity of things in general and the best business methods of briskness and force. Nevertheless, we should not allow ourselves to forget that there is a widening circle of readers who feel that quality, which is another name for the perfect blending of style with material, is the supreme distinction of literature. In this circle were the readers who responded to the magic of "Heaven Trees" and "River House." To me, the discovery of "Heaven Trees" was like finding by accident the picture of something infinitely precious I had known and lost in childhood and could never hope to recover. This was life as my mother and my grandmother had lived it. The verisimilitude of "Heaven Trees" is an aspect of truth we call "the past" and hide away in old volumes; but it is as real in itself as any mechanical fact of today. For there are many kinds of truth. The great tradition is as true to the place and time of its birth as "Poor White" or "Main Street" is true to the time and place of the immediate present. Here is art that has roots.

In these latest stories, which are scarcely stories so much as transmitted impressions, the scene is not confined to the old South of the earlier novels. One is tempted to say that the spirit of place has become, for the moment, a rover. Yet underneath all the changing images of the visible world, the antiphonal life is reflected in a multitude of inarticulate lives. The recurring *motif* winds like a strain of music through almost every tale. Life at its best and its worst is more than mere living. We hear this in the playing of the harp and again in the measured beating of the heart through the stories of "The Harp Player," and "The Land of Juan de Dios." We find it in the theme of woman's divination which is repeated in "The Land of Juan de Dios" and "Ora Pro Nobis."

The first tale, "The Land of Juan de Dios," is a study of mother love, frustrated yet divine, in old San Antonio. There are flashes of deep insight as well as phrases of pure loveliness.

> The birth into the light of day did not mean that the child was one with its mother; on the contrary, they were two beings separated. In the same way now she and her son need not become one in spirit. . . . From the window she saw the stars fading out in the sky, and when they were gone, heard, from the convents and the churches and the missions here and there across the fields to the south, the bells, they were like stars coming out on the air.

"The Light on the Hills," an experiment in evocation, recreates the pride and passion and heart-breaking tragedy of a dying social order. "The Passionate Road" is a sympathetic portrayal of the love that refuses defeat because it is born to serve and to command. In the other stories of Italy there are passages that seem to tear away the fire-colored mask of beauty and to reveal some bright, dark element which is the soul of the Latin race. But always, in spite of its penetration, the scrutiny is guarded, veiled, and disciplined. Always the prose, with its grave rhythm and wistful undertones, is restrained by a sensitive and highly civilized nature. Writing of a Mexican harp player, Stark Young describes a quality he calls "curiously Latin."

> He has *decenza*, as the Italians, for example, mean it—a sense of what is decent, not with the implications of obscenity, exhibition, morality, that belong to our word, but of what is becoming, what is clean and proper in its aspect, respectful toward life, fitting. One is ruled by this decency, because taste is the last fine morality of mind and is the soul of the conscience.

I repeat, here is art that has roots.

# Six Generations

THE TIDES OF MALVERN. By FRANCIS GRISWOLD. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1930. $2.50.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

HERE is the story of a South Carolina family, the Sheldons, and of Malvern, their house outside of Charleston, from the foundation of the estate at the beginning of the eighteenth century to the passing of the house into the hands of Northerners, upon the extinction of

From a portrait of STARK YOUNG by Abram Poole.

the family, in our own times. Mr. Griswold has done his job so well that a Northern reviewer, going clear through the book before reading the jacket notice which identifies the author as a young man from Albany, had supposed he was an old gentleman of Charleston. Possibly a Charlestonian might discover an error here and there, but the most patriotic could not complain that Mr. Griswold has given Charleston and the South Carolina of pre-war days less than its due.

The book lives, the house lives, the family lives; Mr. Griswold's sensitiveness to the peculiar quality, and at the same time the universal humanness of a departed civilization is quite remarkable; combined with his feeling for landscape and its spiritual suggestions he manages to bring history to life in the real people who, after all, have always had to live history. Rather sedulously he evades the common situations of the old-plantation romances; there is occasional melodrama, but less than one expects, and it is plausible in every instance but one—a Revolutionary Tory who was as malignant as some people really are, but as it is hard to persuade your reader that a man really is when he is a character in fiction. And more than once Mr. Griswold turns his story away from a fairly obvious and dramatically effective solution of a situation, to bring it out in a manner less spectacular but thoroughly lifelike. An author must have plenty of material, and plenty of confidence in himself, to do that successfully.

The whole, however, is more effective and more impressive than some of its parts. Covering six generations in three hundred pages requires a good deal of compression, and deliberate avoidance of melodrama makes it inevitable that some things receive more extended treatment than they appear to deserve. But you can hardly fail to keep your interest in the house, and the family as an entity, to the very end.

# Jezebel or Saint?

UNAFRAID. A Life of Anne Hutchinson. By WINNIFRED KING RUGG. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1930. $3.50.

AN AMERICAN JEZEBEL: The Life of Ann Hutchinson. By HELEN AUGUR. New York: Brentano's. 1930. $3.50.

ANN HUTCHINSON. A Biography. By EDITH CURTIS. Cambridge: Washburn & Thomas. 1930. $2.50.

Reviewed by STANLEY T. WILLIAMS

ANN HUTCHINSON was exiled from Massachusetts in 1638 because she bade defiance to the elders of the Puritan theocracy; since that day statue, picture, and legend have damned and canonized her. She was paramour of the Devil or she was our first liberal woman intellectual: she was Jezebel or Puritan Jeanne d'Arc. In the old buckram Puritan records it has been difficult to find much more than a bare chronicle of her heresies. Now, in 1930 three volumes simultaneously recount her life story.

In a way the three represent the entire battle front of the biographers. On the extreme left is Mrs. Rugg's book, loving her story, and theorizing when records fail. On the right wing is Miss Curtis's little volume with its able statement of fact. Somewhere between the two is Miss Augur, carried away, too, by the romance of the story, but very conscious of the restrictions demanded by truth. Thus "Unafraid" begins with a "prologue, in St. Paul's Consistory, London, and ends with an emotional scene in which Mrs. Hutchinson, as the deadly tomahawk deals with her defenders, prays aloud." Solemn, sonorous, like the outpourings of their wise men, majestic speech flowed from her lips. "'I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge . . .'" Between lie dialogue, exclamations, and rhetorical questions, and other devices of the familiar modern method. Yet there are some very capable, even-tempered passages, and one fancies that Mrs. Rugg herself really prefers a less excited tone in biography.

Miss Augur is also excited, but she writes skilfully, and "An American Jezebel," with its discriminating bibliography, somehow conveys the temper of Ann Hutchinson's mind plausibly enough to convince us that the original documents, which Miss Augur has certainly studied with care, would admit such interpretations. Much fact is interwoven with such scenes as that at Mistress Mary Dyer's house where the Puritan women await the birth of her child. If this is not Ann Hutchinson, it is at least a reasonable imaginative portrait of her, and an excellent example of some of the virtues of novelized biography.

It almost seems as if Mr. Howe, in his preface for Miss Curtis's "Anne Hutchinson," had forseen the inevitable approach of the pictorial biographers, for he warns against these very same romantics, saying, "There remains only one fate from which Anne Hutchinson has had the felicity thus far to escape. It may be rash even to name it, so ready are the 'creative biographers' to pounce upon new and alluring themes; she has not been followed, with a wealth of invented detail, through her meagerly recorded experiences in Rhode Island." . . Too late! Mrs. Rugg and Miss Augur had already pounced; and the three Ann Hutchinsons appear at once, to challenge our sense of the past. Perhaps this fear of the "new biography" has placed Miss Curtis a little on the defensive. Her slender sheaf of one hundred and twenty-two pages is gray indeed besides these florid versions. Yet on the whole this Anne Hutchinson is an admonition to her more gorgeous selves. If the imagination longs to fill in the stark outlines, it is at least reassuring to know that all within this book is demonstrable. When Miss Curtis puts the question, which the other two biographers ask, "What sympathy and friendship existed between Henry Vane and Anne Hutchinson?" her temperate answer, guardedly speculative, somehow transcends the melodrama in the other volumes.

Perhaps the most valuable parts of Miss Curtis's book are some very lucid, condensed statements about religious issues, against whose background Ann Hutchinson lived her life. She makes clear how great was Mrs. Hutchinson's sin, in the judgment of her contemporaries, in opposing established authority. Moreover, the bare quotation of words of Mrs. Hutchinson or of John Cotton, without comment, create a drama quite as moving as the more elaborate stage settings. It is to be regretted documentation of the book is sketchy, and that it lacks an index.

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# Vulgarity in Literature

WAS Edgar Allan Poe a major poet? It would surely never occur to any English-speaking critic to say so. And yet, in France from 1850 till the present time, the best poets of each generation—yes, and and the best critics, too—for, like most excellent poets, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Paul Valéry are also admirable critics—have gone out of their way to praise him. Only a year or two ago M. Valéry repeated the now traditional French encomium of Poe and added at the same time a protest against the faintness of our English praise. We who are speakers of English and not English scholars, who were born into the language and from childhood have been pickled in its literature—we can only say, with all due respect, that Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry are wrong and that Poe is not one of our major poets. A taint of vulgarity spoils, for the English reader, all but two or three of his poems—the marvellous "City in the Sea" and "To Helen," for example, whose beauty and crystal perfection make us realize, as we read them, what a very great artist perished on most of the occasions when Poe wrote verse. It is to this perished artist that the French poets pay their tribute. Not being English they are incapable of appreciating those finer shades of vulgarity that ruin Poe for us, just as we, not being French, are incapable of appreciating those finer shades of lyrical beauty which are, for them, the making of La Fontaine.

The substance of Poe is refined; it is his form that is vulgar. He is, as it were, one of Nature's gentlemen, unhappily cursed with incorrigible bad taste. To the most sensitive and high-souled man in the world we should find it hard to forgive, shall we say, the wearing of a diamond ring on every finger. Poe does the equivalent of this in his poetry; we notice the solecism and shudder. Foreign observers do not notice it; they detect only the native gentlemanliness in the poetical intention, not the vulgarity in the details of execution. To them, we seem perversely and quite incomprehensibly unjust.

It is when Poe tries to make it too poetical that his poetry takes on its peculiar tinge of badness. Protesting too much that he is a gentleman, and opulent into the bargain, he falls into vulgarity. Diamond rings on every finger proclaim the parvenu.

Consider, for example, the first stanza of "Ulalume."

> The skies they were ashen and sober;
> The leaves they were crisped and sere—
> The leaves they were withering and sere;
> It was night in the lonesome October
> Of my most immemorial year;
> It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
> In the misty mid region of Weir—
> It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
> In the ghoul-haunted woodlands of Weir.

These lines protest too much (and with what a variety of voices!) that they are poetical, and, protesting, are therefore vulgar. To start with, the wallopping dactylic metre is all too musical. Poetry ought to be musical, but musical with tact, subtly and variously. Metres whose rhythms, as in this case, are strong, insistent, and practically invariable offer the poet a kind of short cut to musicality. They provide him (my subject calls for a mixture of metaphors) with a ready-made, reach-me-down music. He does not have to create a music appropriately modulated to his meaning; all he has to do is to shovel the meaning into the moving stream of the metre and allow the current to carry it along on waves, that, like those of the best hairdressers, are guaranteed permanent. Many nineteenth century poets used those metrical short cuts to music, with artistically fatal results.

> Then when nature around me is smiling
> The last smile which answers to mine,
> I do not believe it beguiling
> Because it reminds me of thine.

How can one take even Byron seriously, when he protests his musicalness in such loud and vulgar accents? It is only by luck or an almost superhuman poetical skill that these all too musical metres can be made to sound, through their insistent barrel-organ rhythms, the intricate, personal music of the poet's own meaning. Byron occasionally, for a line or two, takes the hard kink out of those dactylic permanent waves and appears, so to speak, in his own musical hair; and Hood, by an unparalleled prodigy of technique, turns even the reach-me-down music of "The Bridge of Sighs" into a personal music, made to the measure of the subject and his own emotion. Moore, on the contrary, is always perfectly content with the permanent wave; and Swinburne, that super-Moore of a later generation, was also content to be a permanent waver—the most accomplished, perhaps, in all the history of literature. The complexity of his ready-made musics and his technical skill in varying the number, shape, and contour of his permanent waves are simply astonishing. But, like Poe and the others, he protested too much, he tried to be too poetical. However elaborately devious his short cuts to music may be, they are still short cuts—and short cuts (this is the irony) to poetical vulgarity.

A quotation and a parody will illustrate the difference between ready-made music and music made to measure. I remember (I trust correctly) a simile of Milton's:—

> Like that fair field
> Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
> Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world.

Rearranged according to their musical phrasing, these lines would have to be written thus:—

> Like that fair field of Enna,
> where Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower,
> by gloomy Dis was gathered,
> Which cost Ceres all that pain
> To seek her through the world.

The contrast between the lyrical swiftness of the first four phrases with that row of limping spondees which tells of Ceres's pain, is thrillingly appropriate. Bespoke, the music fits the sense like a glove.

How would Poe have written on the same theme? I have ventured to invent his opening stanza.

> It was noon in the fair field of Enna,
> When Proserpina gathering flowers—
> Herself the most fragrant of flowers,
> Was gathered away to Gehenna
> By the Prince of Plutonian powers;
> Was born down the windings of Brenner
> To the gloom of his amorous bowers—
> Down the tortuous highway of Brenner
> To the god's agapemonous bowers.

Of the versification of "The Raven" Poe says, in his "Philosophy of Composition": "My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done or ever seemed to think of doing an original thing.*" This fact, which Poe hardly exaggerates, speaks volumes for the good sense of the poets. Feeling that almost all strikingly original metres and stanzas were only illegitimate short cuts to a musicalness which, when reached, turned out to be but a poor and vulgar substitute for individual music, they wisely stuck to the less blatantly musical metres of tradition. The ordinary iambic decasyllable, for example, is intrinsically musical enough to be just able, when required, to stand up by itself. But its musical stiffness can easily be taken out of it. It can be now a chasuble, a golden carapace of sound, now, if the poet so desires, a pliant, soft and, musically speaking, almost neutral material, out of which he can fashion a special music of his own to fit his thoughts and feelings in all their incessant transformations. Good landscape painters seldom choose a "picturesque" subject; they want to paint their own picture, not have it imposed on them by nature. In the thoroughly paintable little places of this world you will generally find only bad painters. (It's so easy to paint the thoroughly paintable.) The good ones prefer the unspectacular neutralities of the Home Counties to those Cornish coves and Ligurian fishing villages, whose picturesqueness is the delight of all those who have no pictures of their own to project on to the canvas. It is the same with poetry: good poets avoid what I may call, by analogy, "musicesque" metres, preferring to create their own music out of raw materials as nearly as possible neutral. Only bad poets, or good poets against their better judgment, and by mistake, go to the Musicesque for their material. "For centuries no man, in verse, has ever done or ever seemed to think of doing an original thing." It remained for Poe and the other nineteenth century metrists to do it; Procrustes-like they tortured and amputated significance into fitting the ready-made music of their highly original metres and stanzas. The result was, in most cases, as vulgar as a Royal Academy Sunrise on Ben Nevis (with Highland Cattle) or a genuine hand-painted sketch of Porto-fino.

How could a judge so fastidious as Baudelaire listen to Poe's music and remain unaware of its vulgarity? A happy ignorance of English versification preserved him, I fancy, from this realization. His own imitations of medieval hymns prove how far he was from understanding the first principles of versification in a language where the stresses are not, as in French, equal, but essentially and insistently uneven. In his Latin poems Baudelaire makes the ghost of Bernard of Cluny write as though he had learned his art from Racine. The principles of English versification are much the same as those of medieval Latin. If Baudelaire could discover lines composed of equally stressed syllables in Bernard, he must also have discovered them in Poe. Interpreted according to Racinian principles, such verses as

> It was down by the dank tarn of Auber
> In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir

must have taken on, for Baudelaire, heaven knows what exotic subtlety of rhythm. We can never hope to guess what those ghoul-haunted woodlands mean to a Frenchman possessing only a distant and theoretical knowledge of our language.

Returning now to "Ulalume," we find that its too poetical metre has the effect of vulgarizing by contagion what would be otherwise perfectly harmless and refined technical devices. Thus, even the very mild alliterations in "the ghoul-haunted woodlands of Weir" seem to protest too much. And yet an iambic verse beginning "Woodland of Weir, ghoul-haunted," would not sound in the least overpoetical. It is only in the dactylic environment that those two w's strike one as protesting too much.

And then there are the proper names. Well used, proper names can be relied on to produce the most thrilling musical-magical effects. But use them without discretion, and the magic evaporates into abracadabrical absurdity, or becomes its own mocking parody; the over-emphatic music shrills first into vulgarity and finally into ridiculousness. Poe tends to place his proper names in the most conspicuous position in the line (he uses them constantly as rhyme words), showing them off—these magical-musical jewels—as the *rastacouaire* might display the twin cabochon emeralds at his shirt cuffs and the platinum wrist watch, with his monogram in diamonds. These proper-name rhyme-jewels are particularly flashy in Poe's case because they are mostly dissyllabic. Now, the dissyllabic rhyme in English is poetically so precious and so conspicuous by its richness that, if it is not perfect in itself and perfectly used, it emphatically ruins what is was meant emphatically to adorn. Thus, sound and association make of "Thule" a musical-magical proper name of exceptional power. But when Poe writes,

> I have reached these lands but newly
> From an ultimate dim Thule,

he spoils the effect which the word ought to produce by insisting too much, and incompetently, on its musicality. He shows off his jewel as conspicuously as he can, but only reveals thereby the badness of its setting and his own Levantine love of display. For "newly" does not rhyme with "Thule"—or only rhymes on condition that you pronounce the adverb as though you were a Bengali, or the name as though you came from Whitechapel. The paramour of Goethe's king rhymed perfectly with

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# by Aldous Huxley

the name of his kingdom; and when Laforgue wrote of that *"roi de Thulé, Immaculé"* his *rime riche* was entirely above suspicion. Poe's rich rhymes, on the contrary, are seldom above suspicion. That dank tarn of Auber is only very dubiously a fit poetical companion for the tenth month; and though Mount Yaanek is, *ex hypothesi*, a volcano, the rhyme with volcanic is, frankly, impossible. On other occasions Poe's proper names rhyme not only well enough, but actually, in the particular context, much too well. Dead D'Elormie, in "The Bridal Ballad," is prosodically in order, because Poe had brought his ancestors over with the Conqueror (as he also imported the ancestors of that Guy de Vere who wept his tear over Lenore) for the express purpose of providing a richly musical-magical rhyme to "bore me" and "before me." Dead D'Elormie is first cousin to Edward Lear's aged Uncle Arley sitting on a heap of Barley—ludicrous; but also (unlike dear Uncle Arley) horribly vulgar, because of the too musical lusciousness of his invented name and his display, in all tragical seriousness, of an obviously faked Norman pedigree. Dead D'Elormie is a poetical disaster.

IT is vulgar, in literature, to make a display of emotions which you do not naturally have, but think you ought to have, because all the best people do have them. It is also vulgar (and this is the more common case) to have emotions, but to express them so badly, with so much too many protestings, that you seem to have no natural feelings, but to be merely fabricating emotions by a process of literary forgery. Sincerity in art, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is mainly a matter of talent. Keats's love letters ring true, because he had great literary gifts. Most men and women are capable of feeling passion, but not of expressing it; their love letters (as we learn from the specimens read aloud at inquests and murder trials, in the divorce court, during breach of promise cases) are either tritely flat or tritely bombastic. In either case manifestly insincere, and in the second case also vulgar—for to protest too much is always vulgar, when the protestations are so incompetent as not to carry conviction. And perhaps such excessive protestations can never be convincing, however accomplished the protester. D'Annunzio, for example—nobody could do a job of writing better than d'Annunzio. But when, as is too often the case, he makes much ado about nothing, we find it hard to be convinced either of the importance of the nothing, or of the sincerity of the author's emotion about it—and this in spite of the incomparable splendor of d'Annunzio's much ado. True, excessive protestings may convince a certain public at a certain time. But when the circumstances, which rendered the public sensitive to the force and blind to the vulgarity of the too much protesting, have changed, the protests cease to convince. Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling," for example, protests its author's sensibility with an extravagance that seems now, not merely vulgar, but positively ludicrous. At the time of its publication sentimentality was, for various reasons, extremely fashionable. Circumstances changed and "The Man of Feeling" revealed itself as vulgar to the point of ridiculousness; and vulgar and ridiculous it has remained ever since and doubtless will remain.

THE case of Dickens is a strange one. The really monstrous emotional vulgarity, of which he is guilty now and then in all his books and almost continuously in "The Old Curiosity Shop," is not the emotional vulgarity of one who simulates feelings which he does not have. It is evident, on the contrary, that Dickens felt most poignantly for and with his Little Nell; that he wept over her sufferings, piously revered her goodness, and exulted in her joys. He had an overflowing heart; but the trouble was that it overflowed with such curious, and even rather repellent, secretions. The creator of the later Pickwick and the Cheeryble Brothers, of Tim Linkwater and the Bachelor and Mr. Garland and so many other gruesome old Peter Pans was obviously a little abnormal in his emotional reactions. There was something rather wrong with a man who could take this lachrymose and tremulous pleasure in adult infantility. He would doubtless have justified his rather frightful emotional taste by a reference to the New Testament. But the child-like qualities of character commended by Jesus are certainly not the same as those which distinguish the old infants in Dickens's novels. There is all the difference in the world between infants and children. Infants are stupid and unaware and subhuman. Children are remarkable for their intelligence and ardor, for their curiosity, their intolerance of shams, the clarity and ruthlessness of their vision. From all accounts Jesus must have been childlike, not at all infantile. A childlike man is not a man whose development has been arrested; on the contrary, he is a man who has given himself a chance of continuing to develop long after most adults have muffled themselves in the cocoon of middle-aged habit and convention. An infantile man is one who has not developed at all, or who has regressed towards the womb, into a comfortable unawareness. So far from being attractive and commendable, an infantile man is really a most repulsive, because a truly monstrous and misshapen being. A writer who can tearfully adore those stout or cadaverous old babies, snugly ensconced in their mental and economic womb-substitutes and sucking, between false teeth, their thumbs, must have something seriously amiss with his emotional constitution.

One of Dickens's most striking peculiarities is that, whenever in his writing he becomes emotional, he ceases instantly to use his intelligence. The overflowing of his heart drowns his head and even dims his eyes; for, whenever he is in the melting mood, Dickens ceases to be able, and probably ceases even to wish, to see reality. His one and only desire on these occasions is just to overflow, nothing else. Which he does, with a vengeance and in an atrocious blank verse that is meant to be poetical prose and succeeds only in being the worst kind of fustian. "When Death strikes down the innocent and young, from every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven." And so on, a stanchless flux.

Mentally drowned and blinded by the sticky overflowings of his heart, Dickens was incapable, when moved, of recreating, in terms of art, the reality which had moved him, was even, it would seem, unable to perceive that reality. Little Nell's sufferings and death distressed him as, in real life, they would distress any normally constituted man; for the suffering and death of children raise the problem of evil in its most unanswerable form. It was Dickens's business as a writer to recreate in terms of his art this distressing reality. He failed. The history of Little Nell is distressing indeed, but not as Dickens presumably meant it to be distressing; it is distressing in its ineptitude and vulgar sentimentality.

A child, Ilusha, suffers and dies in Dostoievsky's, "Brothers Karamazov." Why is this history so agonizingly moving, when the tale of Little Nell leaves us not merely cold, but derisive? Comparing the two stories, we are instantly struck by the incomparably greater richness in factual detail of Dostoievsky's creation. Feeling did not prevent him from seeing and recording, or rather recreating. All that happened round Ilusha's death bed he saw, unerringly. The emotion-blinded Dickens noticed practically nothing of what went on in Little Nell's neighborhood during the child's last days. We are almost forced, indeed, to believe that he didn't want to see anything. He wanted to be unaware himself, and he wanted his readers to be unaware, of everything except Little Nell's sufferings on the one hand and her goodness and innocence on the other. But goodness and innocence and the undeservedness of suffering and even, to some extent, suffering itself are only significant in relation to the actual realities of human life. Isolated, they cease to mean anything, perhaps to exist. Even the classical writers surrounded their abstract and algebraical personages with at least the abstract and algebraical implication of the human realities, in relation to which virtues and vices are significant. Thanks to Dickens's pathologically deliberate unawareness, Nell's virtues are marooned, as it were, in the midst of a boundless waste of unreality; isolated, they fade and die. Even her sufferings and death lack significance because of this isolation. Dickens's unawareness was the death of death itself. Unawareness, according to the ethics of Buddhism, is one of the deadly sins. The stupid are wicked. (Incidentally, the cleverest men can sometimes and in certain circumstances reveal themselves as profoundly—criminally—stupid. You can be an acute logician and at the same time an emotional cretin.) Damned in the realm of conduct, the unaware are also damned esthetically. Their art is bad; instead of creating, they murder.

Art, as I have said, is also philosophy, is also science. Other things being equal, the work of art which, in its own way, "says" more about the universe will be better than the work of art which says less. (The "other things" which have to be equal are the forms of beauty, in terms of which the artist must express his philosophic and scientific truths.) Why is "The Rosary" a less admirable novel than "The Brothers Karamazov"? Because the amount of experience of all kinds understood, "felt into," as the Germans would say, and artistically recreated by Mrs. Barclay is small in comparison with that which Dostoievsky feelingly comprehended and knew so consummately well how to recreate in terms of the novelist's art. Dostoievsky covers all Mrs. Barclay's ground and a vast area beside. The pathetic parts of "The Old Curiosity Shop" are as poor in understood and artistically recreated experience as "The Rosary"—indeed, I think they are even poorer. At the same time they are vulgar (which "The Rosary," that genuine masterpiece of the servants' hall, is not.) They are vulgar, because their poverty is a pretentious poverty, because their disease (for the quality of Dickens's sentimentality is truly pathological) professes to be the most radiant health; because they protest their intelligence, their lack of understanding with a vehemence of florid utterance that is not only shocking, but ludicrous.

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## Good Cheer for Readers

(*Continued from page* 153)

bers of the book business, which must always be added, to or subtracted from, price.

What makes talk about books? Reviewing and advertising indirectly, but directly the intelligent interest of those good readers who in every community start the talk about good books. And yet to get the talkers started, to bring books to their attention by the right advertising or a criticism flush with enthusiasm, there must be good books to go on. Not even Charles Lamb could have been made to talk excitedly about the book season of 1929-1930.

This year, thank heavens, apparently we are going to have the books! Already stirs of excitement precede the publication of a dozen early books:—a really excellent novel by Booth Tarkington; an extraordinary story of Manchuria, humorous and beautiful, by Stella Benson; the best novel of her series, by Martha Ostenso; a fresh and vivid book, compounded of adventure and mysticism, called "Lives of a Bengal Lancer"; the impressive autobiography of the Archduchess Marie; the first really good novel of the Russian Revolution, called "A Quiet Street"; fine novels by A. P. Herbert and Francis Brett Young; a book on the Victorians by Esmé Wingfield-Stratford that puts new meanings in Victorianism; another important contribution to the literature of our South in a novel by Isa Glenn; a new and admirable novel by Priestley, as rich in content as "The Good Companions" and better fiction; more Siegfried Sassoon; the intimate letters of Archie Butt; a brilliant life of Daniel Webster. . . . But this is only a sampling, enough, however, to excite a reader. And enough, too, to make it safe to assert that this year we shall have a chance to test the theory expressed in these paragraphs. For, with (we hope and expect) not too many of the other kind, we are going to have plenty of real books, after a dead interval. It is our belief that the public, hard times or no hard times, will want them.

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SKUNK—*An American mephitine musteloid carnivore of stout form, with a bushy tail, and very large anal glands that secrete a liquid of very offensive odor which can be ejected at will.*

Before you can fully understand this definition, you must have patience to look up the meanings of *mephitine* and *musteloid*, and possibly *carnivore* and *anal*. Four obstacles to easy comprehension!

Let us try defining *skunk* again. Turning to another dictionary, assume that you read:

SKUNK—*A fetid animal of the American genus* Mephitis, M. Mephitica. *By extension—2. Any species of one of the American genera* Mephitis Spilogale, *and* Conepatus, *and some others of the family* Mustidae, *as the African zorille, Asiatic zeledu, or stinkard, etc. See these words.*

After being annoyed by a mere parade of Latin names, we are told to look farther!

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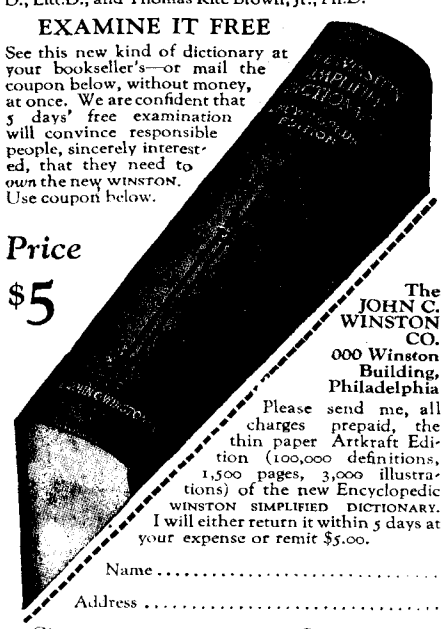

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# Books of Special Interest

## Strictly Homebrew

FORGERY IN CHRISTIANITY: A Documented Record of Jewish-Christian Forgeries, Frauds, and Fakeries. By JOSEPH WHELESS. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1930. $4.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN W. BACON
Yale University

THIS is one of the massive crudities of America unveiled before the astonished eyes of Europe since the conflict inaugurated by the Scopes trial between Fundamentalism and Atheism. A few foreign visitors have been already induced to follow from New York to Los Angeles the national highway known as Main Street. Possibly more may be induced to make the trip under the guidance of one who confesses himself "a trained lawyer with wide reading and profound learning." The legal training (private) seems to have been pursued under the maxim, where the evidence is weak, abuse the opponent's lawyer.

Mr. Wheless has framed an indictment which Burke might well envy, not "against a whole nation" merely, but against all the nations of Christendom in all their history. This is his modest undertaking:

> I charge and purpose to prove, from unimpeachable texts and historical records, and by authoritative clerical confessions, beyond the possibility of denial, evasion, or refutation:
>
> 1. That the Bible, in its every Book, and in the strictest legal and moral sense, is a huge forgery.
>
> Six further items in the Indictment follow whose general substance may be gathered from No. 5 without burdening the reader with more raving.
>
> 5. That the Church was founded upon, and through the Dark Ages of Faith has battened on—(yet languishes decadently upon)—monumental and petty forgeries and pious frauds, possible only because of its own shameless mendacity and through the crass ignorance and superstition of the sodden masses of its deluded votaries purposely kept in that base condition for purposes of ecclesiastical graft and aggrandizement through conscious and most unconscionable imposture.

This haughty challenge Mr. Wheless "flings in the face of the Church." To impress it more thoroughly on any reader who may be disposed to question his immense erudition he even translates it into what he obviously supposes to be Latin, "*in facia* (sic) *ecclesiæ*."

It is a pity that the extreme youth of Mr. Wheless prevented committal to his hands of the defendants case in the *cause célèbre* already mentioned, instead of the clumsy hands of Clarence Darrow. However, Mr. Wheless has prepared himself to fight the battle o'er again by diligent reading of Maynard Shipley's "arsenal of defense against canting religious Pharisaism" entitled "The War on Modern Science; a Short History of the Fundamentalist Attacks on Evolution and Modernism," 1929. A judicial frame of mind being thus induced he exhibits his "wide reading" through copious clippings from the newspapers, and his "profound learning" by alternate extracts from the "Catholic Encyclopædia" (a "clerical confession" which unaccountably escaped suppression by the Roman Curia) and the "Encyclopædia Biblica," a standard critical authority of liberal Protestant scholars. Seated at his ease between these two, generously supplied by the staff of any good theological library, he doubtless also has such assistance as enables him to translate from the original Greek such a passage as that quoted from Paul on p. 1 (capitals from Wheless) "Being crafty I caught you with guile. . . . For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my LIE unto his glory; why yet am I also adjudged a sinner." Thus comfortably ensconced he can nibble like Alice in Wonderland, from the one authority when he wishes to be one of the "sodden mass of deluded votaries," or from the other when he wishes to rise to the level of the historico-critical scholar. A theory of intentional fraud discarded since the days of the eighteenth century deists makes him more than a match for the *omnis genus* of priestcraft.

Let not the reader suspect golden support from Moscow. Soviet atheism is doubtless glad enough of volunteer allies in its attempt to *écraser l' infame*, but its gold is quite too scarce to be wasted in payment for "confessions" accessible to every reader and discovery which only applies to religion the same reproach for derivation from a background of superstition and credulity as would apply to astronomy or chemistry. In addition the author will be greatly overpaid by home patronage. Mr. Wheless's product is genuine bootlegger stuff, guaranteed to produce blind staggers in minimum quantity. Its base is the standard government article, diverted from medical and sacramental use. The flavoring is newspaper polemic. Only the labels are original—and the Latin. That is strictly homebrew.

## Asia Minor and Syria

THE HITTITE EMPIRE. By JOHN GARSTANG. New York: Richard R. Smith. 1930. $6.

Reviewed by E. H. STURTEVANT
Yale University

SINCE Professor Garstang's "Land of the Hittites" appeared in 1910 our knowledge of the ancient history of Asia Minor and Syria has been enormously increased not only by new excavations but even more by the interpretation of the texts in the Hittite language which Hugo Winckler discovered at Boghaz Keui in 1907. The discovery of these documents was recorded in the earlier volume, but their interpretation belongs to the period since the war. Under these circumstances the author has made so thorough a revision that he preferred to give the work a new title.

As a survey of geography and monuments the book is very satisfactory. The geographical descriptions, buttressed by excellent maps, are particularly useful. The "Land of the Hittites" was adorned by numerous landscapes and pictures of modern villages and their inhabitants, many of which have been omitted to make room for fuller illustration of the monuments. While this process might well have been carried further, it would, of course, be impossible to include in a single volume anything like a complete publication of even the more important monuments. What we have is a serviceable introduction with remarkably full descriptions and bibliography.

The historical interpretation is less successful. Now that we have contemporary documents of Hittite history a first-hand knowledge of them is what the historian chiefly needs. Professor Garstang realizes the importance of these documents, and he uses several that are to be had in translation; but how inadequate these few are becomes apparent if one compares the chapter entitled "Historical Outline" with Albrecht Götze's "Das Hithiter-Reich, Seine Stellung zwischen Ost und West," which appeared in Vol. 27, Part 2 of "Der Alte Orient" (Leipzig, 1928). Götze made full use of the Hittite texts, and the light they shed upon Hittite history completely eclipses Professor Garstang's treatment. In fact the chapter contains errors that could not be made by one familiar with the texts, such as the ascription of the law code to the second rather than the first Hittite empire, or the statement that Hittite documents relating to the period just before 1400 B. C. "are still largely unintelligible," whereas no such documents are known. More serious is the absence of any clear outline of the main course of events, such as Götze is able to supply for the earlier empire (c. 1900-1650 B.C.) as well as for the more powerful empire of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries.

It is Götze again whose familiarity with the texts has supplied the only reasonable interpretation of the archæological monuments. Professor Garstang recognizes that the so-called "Hittite" art of Northern Syria cannot be derived from that of Hittite Asia Minor, and he observes that the relationship of the two with each other and with Mitanni existed even before the Hittite conquests in Syria. He is also inclined to credit the Hittites with an Indo-European origin, a conclusion that he could not doubt if he righly understood the linguistic evidence. It has remained for Götze, however, in a review of David Hogarth's "Kings of the Hittites" (*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 1927), to draw the inevitable conclusion that this "Hittite" art is indigenous to Northern Mesopotamia or a neighboring region and is probably to be ascribed to the Hurli (not Harri, as our author still writes) and their kinsmen, the Mitanni. To them belong also the conical cap, the turned-up shoes, the storm god Teshup, and the "Hittite" hieroglyphic system of writing. All these were borrowed by the Indo-European Hittite invaders, just as the Hellenes adopted a large part of the indigenous Aegean civilization.

Professor Garstang has given us a welcome summary of the archeological evidence for the earliest history of Asia Minor and North Syria, but the reader must look elsewhere for the interpretation.

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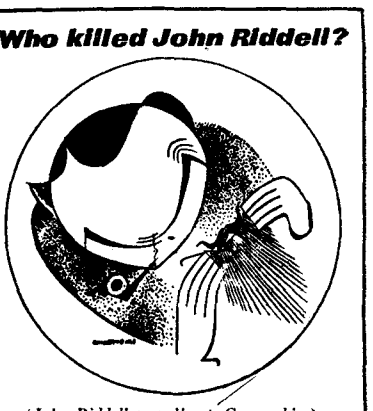

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# Round about Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

WE are printing below two letters which would ordinarily be placed in the *Saturday Review's* correspondence columns. But inasmuch as the remark that called forth Mr. Wilson's communication was ours, and we forwarded the letter to Mr. Untermeyer in order to give him the opportunity of replying in the same issue of this periodical, we think that the two letters properly belong in this department. As for ourself, we endorse our original statement concerning the acuteness of Mr. Untermeyer's ear for true poetry; and his "zest for discovery" must be entirely obvious to anyone who has followed his critical writings through the past fifteen years. If Mr. Untermeyer has "advertised contemporary poetry," in the sense that any appreciation of contemporary poetry is an advertisement, —why, good for him! If club women think it fashionable to give little lectures on modern poetry, and go to him as an oracle (the darlings!), they could do considerably worse. In our opinion, Mr. Untermeyer's critical acumen most certainly far surpasses that of the mere "competent booster of poetry." There we quite flatly disagree with Mr. Wilson.

It is axiomatic that every critic of literature is entitled to his own opinion. Also it has been our own experience that over a space of, say, ten years one changes one's mind about a good many things. Mr. Untermeyer and ourself have often disagreed concerning the work of individual poets. He has, at times, revised his opinions. We have, at times, revised ours. As for "prestige," Mr. Wilson would seem to indicate that the preservation of that rather nebulous acquisition is dependent upon praise of all the latest poetry. We therefore herewith joyfully cast to the winds any "prestige" we may conceive ourself as having,—with a gusty hurrah! We roundly affirm that we think very little of Mr. Pound's "Cantos," that we cannot see the slightest reason for any fuss about Laura Riding, and that the poetry of Yvor Winters seems to us extremely overrated. And, as a matter of fact, there has been far too much fanfare concerning Hart Crane, and a good deal too much concerning Robinson Jeffers. Also, Allen Tate has a long way to go before he will ever be a notable poet. And to mention Crane, or even Rimbaud, in the same breath with Blake is simply to revel in confusion. (Snap! Snap!) *That* for "*prestige*"!

### MR. WILSON'S LETTER

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

I note that in his "Round about Parnassus" column for August 2, Mr. William Rose Benét praises Mr. Louis Untermeyer's new and revised edition of "Modern American Poetry." The anthology is perhaps the most adequate one we have at present, but when Mr. Benét says of Untermeyer, "His ear for true poetry, even in the midst of more mediocre work, is acute, his zest for discovery is undiminished," I protest. I think it is time that some one called attention to the fact that Untermeyer's powers of discrimination as anthologist, and more especially as critic, are not particularly acute. He has advertised contemporary poetry as if it were some desirable luxury, and his readers (notably club women who think it is fashionable to give little lectures on modern poetry) have gone to him as one would to an oracle. What I object to is anyone considering him as more than a competent booster of poetry.

Now Untermeyer has shown a consistent and irritating lack of critical judgment in his volumes on the contemporary poetic scene. It is interesting to note that his evaluations of an author differ from year to year; that in 1920 he may say that such and such a poet is third-rate, but in 1930 one finds him speaking of the same poet as distinctly first-rate. Of course such a thing is excusable when the critic has sound reasons for a change of opinion; for instance, the poet may have developed considerably since the first evaluation. But the fact remains that Untermeyer has not had any very sound reasons for his change of front. General critical opinion has forced him to recognize the poets whom he would at one time have ignored or belittled. (To prove this point, I wish to quote the following concerning the poetry of Marianne Moore. This was printed in his book, "The New Era in American Poetry—1919." After disparaging most of the contributors to "Others" he calls Miss Moore's poems "strained vociferations." But in the 1925 edition of his anthology he writes of the same writer's work, "Hers is never, not even in her most eccentric designs, a loose structure of fortuitous phrases." The reader may draw what conclusions are appropriate to this.) Untermeyer has done the same thing with E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, and T. S. Eliot. In his volume "American Poetry since 1900" Untermeyer says of some lines of Eliot's "Waste Land" that the author does not hesitate to stoop to doggerel that would be refused entry to the cheapest of daily columns. The remark proves that Untermeyer did not grasp the meaning of "The Waste Land," for had he understood it, he would have realized the utter lack of critical understanding evidenced in that criticism. He is responsible, too, for the idea (as Allen Tate has pointed out) that the younger writers constitute a group of poets best designated by the term "cerebralists"—as if all the great poetry of the past is not equally cerebral. He would not have spoken of Hart Crane's lines as being "cold victories of the intellect" had he grasped the intentions or meaning inherent in the poetry of Blake, or Rimbaud, or Milton, or the Elizabethans. But Untermeyer's new edition of the anthology is valuable chiefly because it contains some of the work of these "cerebralists." I suspect that Untermeyer himself prefers what he believes to be "simpler" verse, but that he has been forced to include Crane, Cowley, Tate, etc., to save what prestige he yet has.

Mr. Untermeyer still remains blind to the virtues of the work of such persons as Laura Riding and Yvor Winters. And I cannot forget his remarks about the Ezra Pound of the "Cantos"—the Pound who is by far one of the most significant men writing today. (See his "American Poetry since 1900.") By the time his anthology is ready for another revision these writers will probably be included, and by the time he chooses to present us with a new critical volume he will probably be praising Pound's "Cantos," but if that happens it will be for the same reason that has forced him to alter his verdict on Crane, Marianne Moore, and T. S. Eliot.

Sincerely yours,

T. C. WILSON.

Columbus, Ohio.

### MR. UNTERMEYER'S REPLY

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

Although I swore off the dubious pleasure of controversy a few years ago, and although any reply to unfriendly criticism smacks of self-defense, I feel an answer to Mr. Wilson's letter is called for.

Let me admit at once I have always been a "centrist," although that position has not prevented me from leaning now to the left, now somewhat to the right. Though I enjoy experiment and appreciate the pendulum-play of convention and revolt, I confess I am (at least as anthologist) more concerned with accomplishment than experiment. Thus I have possibly under-emphasized the effects gained by impressionism, tangential nuance, private allusions, and the over-subtlety to which the experimental technician has to resort. It still seems to me that the great creator has worked within the tradition, or rather has pushed the tradition a bit further on, instead of distorting it by imposing his violences or vagaries of emotion upon it. Schubert still seems to me more important than Schoenberg, the Elizabethans more valuable than the Euphuists. I stubbornly cling to my own interpretation of the classics—even to such curiously juxtaposed figures as Milton and Rimbaud—without forcing a relation upon them which is a convention, and, what is more, only a convention of the moment.

So much for personal generalities. To descend to the particularities involved would necessitate several columns of quotations from the various editions of "Modern American Poetry" and "American Poetry since 1900," and this, even with the generosity of *The Saturday Review*, I am unwilling to do. I will content myself with saying that an isolated sentence or two scarcely gives the intention of the whole and that some of Mr. Wilson's quotations are exaggerated at least in implication. Mr. Wilson charges me with "a consistent and irritating lack of critical judgment on the contemporary poetic scene"—and cites my reservations in the case of nine poets (Eliot, Pound, Cummings, Crane, Cowley, Tate, Winters, Marianne Moore, and Laura Riding), although the volume includes some one hundred and fifty-three.

Since I have entered so lengthy a demurrer, let me be specific about these nine. I confess, without apology, that my admiration for Eliot, Pound, and Marianne Moore has definitely increased since writing "The New Era in American Poetry" in 1918, a growth (and change) in taste not unnatural during the course of twelve rapidly moving years. I care more for the later work of Hart Crane than I do for his earlier, and have continued to say so unequivocally. My mixed admiration and reservations concerning Cummings still stand. Winters has always seemed to me a far better critic and more interesting theorist than a poet. I admit to at least two blind spots whenever I consider the work of Laura Riding. I have never found the work of Malcolm Cowley in any sense "difficult," and have applauded both Cowley and Tate from the beginning—to say nothing of such not altogether "simple" poets as John Crowe Ransom, Archibald MacLeish, Phelps Putnam, James Whaler, Merrill Moore, Robert Penn Warren, Louise Bogan, and Léonie Adams —a fact which Mr. Wilson conveniently forgets. It has been in no effort to "save my prestige" that I have revised both the book and my own judgments, and my objector's prophecies for a new edition to do justice to Pound are a bit gratuitous and careless. If he will actually examine the volume he is attacking, he will discover a rather lengthy paragraph attempting to

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analyze and even praise the "Cantos" of Ezra Pound.

For the rest I must—as every editor must—fall back on the limitations of his temperament and conclude with a cheerful *chacun à son goût*.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

Elizabethtown, New York.

ARCHY AND MEHITABEL. By DON MARQUIS. Doubleday, Doran. 1930.

Inimitable archy, the cockroach who could work the typewriter! Inimitable mehitabel, the cat who had once been cleopatra! Don Marquis's famous column, *The Sun Dial*, hatched these lyric creatures some years ago, but they go on forever. And they now go on in a special edition. And George Herriman, the creator of Krazy Kat, was the perfect artist to choose for their illustration. He does 'em in thumbnail size all through the book, and also for cover and endpapers.

archy's private dicta and the dictation he takes from the gallant Mehitabel, whose war-cry is *toujours gai*, furnish forth a book of the most approved free verse, without punctuation or capitals because archy couldn't work the shift-key. Its nonsense is wrapped around philosophy like skewered bacon around an olive; *vide* "the robin and the worm."

*the quite irrational ichneumon*
*is such a fool it is almost human*

is an example of archy's patness with rhyme, which is interspersed liberally. Freddy the rat, Bliggens the toad, a cockroach of the taverns, Pete the parrot, and the old trouper cat, are other characters you will meet with in the course of reading. There are sidelights cast on modern manias. There is cosmic cogitation. There is classic discourse, full-bodied humor, and insect and feline adventures by flood and field.

As this doesn't leave us much room for reviewing any other books of poetry on our desk, and in order to end on a note of conviviality, we shall conclude with one of a series of sonnets we are at present writing upon the pleasures of the bar. We give you therefore:

THE MARTINI

*Gin and Vermouth our English cousins think of*
*And name this drink, and call for "Gin and It"*
*Since French Vermouth they do not like a bit,—*
*but they've no ice to make a proper drink of!*
*A luke-warm cocktail? Stand upon the brink of*
*Deep-terraced Hell, and view the vaporous pit*
*Where sizzling souls screech scarlet on the spit,—*
*Man, that's no place to make a skating-rink of!—*

*Yet such the æsophagus when, craving clear*
*Cold ichor, the palate shudders at warm gin.*
*But ah, the heavenly quiver as we feel*
*True chilled Martinis like Ithuriel's spear*
*Transfixing all dubiety within,*
*Oiled by an olive and shred of lemon-peel!*

---

Governor Theodore Roosevelt of Porto Rico (who can quote verbatim more of Edwin Arlington Robinson's poems than can anyone else) is offering a prize, the Roosevelt Prize, for poems by native-born Porto Ricans. Two medals are offered, one for a poem in English, the other for one in Spanish, and the award will be made on the anniversary of the Discovery of America, October 12th. No restriction is placed on contestants as to choice of subject or length. The medals will bear on the converse portrait busts of Rubén Darío and Walt Whitman. On the obverse the map of the two Americas, symbolically centered by Porto Rico. A large number of manuscripts has already been received. Porto Rico counts an interesting and highly original group of poets. One of them, Luis Palés Matos, is comprehensively and entertainingly dealt with by Tomás Blanco in the September *American Mercury*.

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We quote the following paragraph from an August issue of the *Manchester Guardian*:

"According to Mr. Conrad Aiken, the well-known American poet, 'England is more inspirational to poetry than America.' It doesn't seem to have done him much good, anyway— the quoted sentence sounds most horrid and unedifying, and 'inspirational' is a detestable adjective, reeking of educational conferences, the higher criticism, professors of English literature, and everything that is the opposite end of the stick from the native wood-notes wild of pure poetry.

*Such adjectives should be employed*
*By writers grave and critical,*
*By men well-versed in Jung and Freud*
*And psycho-analytical.*
*O leave such terms to blokes with views*
*On subjects educational—*
*But bards should never, never use*
*A word like 'inspirational'!"*


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# A Letter from France

By ABEL CHEVALLEY

"LA SAGESSE DE SHAKESPEARE ET DE GOETHE," such is the title of a book by René Berthelot which ought to interest your humanists. If considerations of space and time allowed me to philosophize at leisure in these letters, I would detail the reasons which recommend M. Berthelot's work to the tantalizing authors of those Essays on the outlook of modern civilization, edited by Norman Foerster, which I find at the same time so interesting and so elusive. M. René Berthelot has at least the merit of placing his humanism on a concrete basis, represented by the wisdom of Shakespeare and Goethe. Whether the whole structure is quite free of blind alleys and half-lit recesses, I do not guarantee. I carry from a first reading one or two disturbing impressions of attics without staircase, or staircases leading nowhere. But it is none the less a book that deserves the earnest attention of a school of thought and conduct which we are associating more and more closely with what is best in American culture. You are probably aware that René Berthelot is also the author of a three volume study on Pragmatism, called "Un Romantisme Utilitaire" (Alcan).

"Romanesques et Romantiques," by Emile Henriot (Plon), consists of a series of articles published in *Le Temps* commemorating many aspects more or less recently discovered of the life and work of those great men of letters and action who adorned the beginning of the nineteenth century, Stendhal, Constant, Chateaubriand, Balzac, Hugo, Musset, etc. One of these papers deals with Napoleon's early writings, and if there is a better summary of that most curious phase and aspect of his life, it has not come my way. The whole book is a mine of information, and delightfully, because soberly and unpretentiously, written.

Jean Balde is, as you know, the pseudonym of one of those few women novelists whose books can be left in a husband's hands by his wife, in a father's library by his daughter. She has told the story of her great-uncle François Bladé, the Gascon *érudit* and folklorist, in a most charming biography. That Bladé is now unforgettable. And what a delightful picture of his little town, Lectoure, in Armagnac. I discovered Lectoure three years ago, perched *sur son acropole de rochers roux, couleur d'eau de vie et d'argile cuite*, with its cathedral *épaisse et rustaude, dans sa rousse robe de pierre*, surrounded by its *ceinture d'arbres en fleurs*, and swore that some Gascon Bergeret, or some other Montaigne, must have been nourished within its crumbling walls. But no. . . . The oldest inhabitant remembered only noisy deputies and bearded senators. Now Jean-François Bladé has come into his own. If Jean Balde has other characters of the same kidney in her archives, she can spare the trouble of inventing plots and writing novels.

"La Vie Humiliée de Henri Heine," by Camille Mauclair, and of Gobineau, by J. N. Faure-Biguet, are both in the series of "Le Roman des Grandes Existences," published by Plon. M. Camille Mauclair notes that Poe, Baudelaire, and Henri Heine, all *poètes maudits* of their time, have become more or less an object of intangible veneration in ours. But Heine is not yet "taboo." M. Mauclair tells the story of his life without fear or favor. His book is a sincere and exhaustive piece of biography.

In spite of many recent reprints and publications under the diligent care of his grandsons MM. Serpeille de Gobineau, the life of that great and pathetic inventor of the Nordic supremacy is yet but little known. M. Faure Biguet has thrown some light on his subject. He touches lightly on the catastrophe at the end of Gobineau's career caused by "the Démon de Midi." Never did the lure of sentimental and sensual adventure lead astray a sillier genius. Gobineau was then minister of France at Stockholm. Neither Goethe nor Hugo paid for their old age vagaries. Gobineau did and was damned for it.

The lives of Cortes by Jean Babelon (excellent), Pizarro, by Louis Baudin, Bolivar, by Louis Lafont and Tersane, are fresh testimony to that renewed interest in Latin America, so noticeable in France since the war. In "Les Jauniers," Paul Monet vituperates our methods of colonization in Indo-China. "La Vie Des Forcats," by Eugène Dieudonné a liberated convict, is more objective though not free of a lurking tenderness for those poor, unhappy murderers who made the mistake of being caught red-handed. It is, however, an honest and straightforward book. It does not leave the impression of doing dirty work for the benefit of other propagandists never weary of killing and strafing in their own country. M. Dieudonné praises the American way of dealing with its criimnals at Porto Rico. He finds it laudably practical, charitable, human. That must be one of the reasons why criminality in America is on the wane.

An American sailor landing at Marseilles for the first time falls into the hands of a pretty little prostitute, is robbed of his money and papers, and left seriously wounded by a gang of ruffians. When he leaves the town hospital, penniless, without any means of proving his identity, he drifts about, starving, and is at last annexed by a tribe of gypsies and ragsmen, then he becomes a citizen of that underworld of Marseilles which is perhaps the wickedest and most picturesque of all the underworlds. He refuses to return to America when the occasion arises for he loves and hates at the same time the girl who ensnared him. He ends by killing her and, usurping another man's identity, starts again into what may happen to be a respectable life. As a picture of Marseilles low life, the book is not without interest. Why it was awarded the Prize of the Vikings, I do not know. There is precious little of the Viking spirit in a Marseilles mob. However, "Hans le Marin," by Edonard Peisson (Grasset), would probably appeal to those many Americans who share with many Europeans the feeling that Marseilles is, more completely perhaps than Constantinople, an epitome of the old continent.

Let me note before ending this letter, two good and useful translations, one from the Spanish: "Zogoïbi," by Enrique Larreta, translated by Francis de Miomandre, and "Un, Personne, et Cent Mille," by Pirandello, translated by L. Serven. Enrique Larreta has had the privilege of finding in France his best interpreters. Rémy de Gourmont translated his novel, "La Gloire de Don Ramire," when he (Larreta) was minister of Argentina in Paris. If I am not mistaken, Francis de Miomandre will be of no less service to his literary fame.

## A Posthumous Volume

PROSES PLASTIQUES. By GEORGE EEKHOUD. Paris: La Renaissance du Livre. 1929.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN M. WOODBRIDGE

GEORGES EEKHOUD, the most justly famous of recent Belgian novelists, died in 1927. "Proses Plastiques" is a small volume of stories and sketches, all written near the close of his life. Perhaps no single volume of his works gives a more comprehensive glimpse of his personality. He calls himself the romancer of the pariahs and of the humble; the rebel who chose as the epigraph of "My Communions" the boutade of De Quincey: "The rare individuals who have aroused my contempt in this world were prosperous folk of good reputation"—(I translate his translation)—is omnipresent in this volume. Yet there is no lack of variety: a dramatic historical incident, "Les Sorciers de Borght," is followed by tender and humorous memories of childhood, "Les Protégés de ma Grand'Mère,"—this delightful old lady appears in his novel "Escal Vigor"; then there is "Bino," the story of the author's pet hare, not unknown to fame even in America, and a Rabelaisian sketch "Kokkerjo," that would delight the heart of certain of the old Dutch masters. Perhaps these are the most successful. Every one of the tales is a bit of autobiography. They tell of things seen, or recalled by things seen, which left a lasting impression on him.

"L'amour, la seule éternité qui importe!" are the last words of the book, and in the beginning Eekhoud tells us that in his youth he would have embraced the whole world. Yet he was a splendid hater. Never perhaps have the egoistic and hypocritical bourgeois been seared with a more vitriolic pen. His rich and colorful style is at the service of the oppressed whom society often regards as criminals but he as more or less conscious idealists.

His was a cosmopolitan mind and temper. He knew many languages and literatures. Anglo-Saxons should be grateful for his translations and studies of the Elizabethan dramatists whose vigor and zest for boisterous life fascinated him. Yet he was also a lover of Cowper and of poets of quiet domesticity.

A revolutionary surely and of the most crimson tinge, but also a humanitarian saint, he deserves our affectionate respect by his philanthropy and our admiration for the wealth and imagery of his art.

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# The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received. Many of them will be reviewed later.

## Belles Lettres

THE WALKING STICK. By C. E. SCOGGINS. Bobbs-Merrill. 1930. $1.

This is a queer one. It is neither a novel nor a short story, but some indeterminate form that is rather annoying. After all, the familiar story lengths are likely to be comfortable and reassuring. Mr. Scoggins's subject matter is trite; he is several years behindhand. Why flog a dead horse? Rotarianism, small town standardization, and intolerance—why rush around making a great show of beating these poor literary corpses, when there are so many nimbler and worthier enemies at large? Mr. Scoggins, perhaps, likes to take plenty of time to think things over. At any rate, he is evangelical, heroically in earnest, but thoroughly insipid.

Most readers will find the book unattractive in format and typography.

NOT FOR CHILDREN. Pictures and Verse. By ROLAND YOUNG. Doubleday, Doran. $2.

Most of us know Roland Young the delightful actor. Few are, however, familiar with the private zoo in his brain, and with the fact that he can draw, paint, and write verse. Here is a picture book to prove it. His creatures are amusing, and they are limned boldly. His pig's ears are all wrong, but that is about the only fault we can find with his draughtsmanship. It is sufficiently cuckoo to charm. A characteristic example of the verse is:

*And here's the happy, bounding flea—*
*You cannot tell the he from she.*
*The sexes look alike, you see;*
*But she can tell and so can he.*

## Fiction

THE BRACELET. By ROBERT HICHENS. Cosmopolitan. 1930. $2.

Readers who are used to thinking of Mr. Hichens's stories as playing in the romantic, soft desert of Africa, as in the past, are doomed to disappointment in this latest novel. There is nothing of the warmth of the desert or the desert people in it; it is all cold and foggy and damp and disagreeable and gloomy, both the *mise-en-scène* and its characters. It carries, however, in part, the drama that he always manages to inject into his books and which makes you persevere uutil the end if only to see what happens to the main character. Despite this dramatic strength "The Bracelet" takes a very long time getting started, and one begins to wonder if all the artifice and trials and despairs of its chief character are important at all and if they are worth following to the end.

However, once the male cause of the trouble has by his own death practically precluded the matter of the bracelet being cleared up properly, the story starts to move and begins to interest. This despite the fact that it is perfectly obvious to the reader who the guilty party is. But one is content to wait and see how soon everybody else will find out the truth of the matter. The interminably long dialogues, and the fact that the character of Olivia wins little sympathy for her plight, operates greatly in disfavor of the book. However, those interested in English "society" and its *modus operandi* may enjoy the many scenes set therein.

AN ABANDONED WOMAN. By HOWARD VINCENT O'BRIEN. Doubleday, Doran. 1930. $1.

The mothering instinct in all females is sincerely and faithfully and sometimes dramatically limned in Mr. O'Brien's latest novel of American and European circles of society and art. The tale of the woman who leaves her somewhat stolid and "busy" husband and her two children for an itinerant artist is not particularly novel nor especially new in this instance in its handling or in its detail. Mr. O'Brien, who is literary editor of the Chicago *Daily News*, has donated much better wares to the literary market. In all matter of workmanship, however, the book is well done; its subject matter is merely trite, but it will hold a certain interest for those who will read, largely to know whether Joan's gypsy life with the artist will last and if not, what she will do next.

At least two of the characters of the book, outside of the main one, are a delight in drawing and characterization: the Paris art dealer and his wife, who quarrel charmingly and are inseparable. The rest, including the protagonist Joan, are of the usual sort in similar stories. Since, however, the tale does move along it will satisfy many readers who like stories about society and arty folk among whom they enjoy vicariously moving. It contains some at times interesting picturizations of artistic existence on the Riviera where folks go in winter to escape the cold, but where, according to Mr. O'Brien, who ought to know, it is not quite so warm as it is thought to be.

FRENCH LEAVE. By JEANNETTE PHILLIPS GIBBS. Little, Brown. 1930. $2.50.

This is essentially a love story, the account of a long-continued, happy honeymoon in Paris. It is given a certain difference from the old-fashioned form by the introduction of a first wife from whom the hero is separated but not divorced, but the resulting variation from the normal comes to no more than: "So they did not marry, and they lived together happily forever after." The opposition of Muriel's family, the entrance of the son of the first marriage, even the visit of the first wife, are not felt by the reader as real difficulties; they are only incidents in the life of the devoted, unmarried pair.

Mrs. Gibbs has presented a very attractive picture of Bohemian life in Paris; her Charles voices all the unconventional views one expects and likes to hear from a Beloved Vagabond, and her Muriel imports comfort and order into the studio. The author herself seems to feel a fondness for Charles which enables her to make him more sympathetic than one would expect a complete and conscientious egoist to be; the artist who admits no human obligations is a common type in fiction, but not many writers succeed so well in conveying the charm they describe in it.

Mrs. Gibbs succeeds so well with the Bohemian characters and scenes that she never seems at home for long with any of the others; she is always slipping back into her Parisian manner. For example, at the beginning of the acquaintance between Charles and Muriel, they engage in a characteristic dialogue:

"It's half-past twelve," she said finally, looking at her watch. "Irene is late with lunch."
"Are you hungry?" asked Charles.
"I haven't thought about that," said Muriel.
"Then," said Charles, "lunch isn't late."
"At that moment Irene came in."

This is very good as an example of Charles's philosophy—and consistent good luck. But later one encounters a highly proper and conventional American couple—Emily, Charles' first wife, in fact, who drove him away by her propriety, and John, who has loved her since childhood. They are in Paris, and John orders supper.

"You're very extravagant," said Emily.
"Don't you like caviar and champagne?"
"Of course I do," she said.
"Then there is nothing extravagant about it at all."
She smiled. "I think I'm hungry."

Here the man who is apparently intended as a foil to Charles is unexpectedly talking exactly like him, and Emily is not displeased. This latent similarity among the different characters is responsible for a certain feeling of unreality about the obstacles in the course of true love, and a slight monotony of happiness. But by the same token "French Leave" is a very pleasant book, and one which will be popular.

IDYLL'S END. By CLAUDE ANET. Dodd, Mead. 1930. $2.50.

The Mayerling tragedy, with its background of intrigue, mutton chop whiskers, and true love blighted forever, is about as far from us in historical perspective today as it could possibly be, yet in its time it caused an immense amount of excitement. Moreover, it may be said in one way to have caused the world war, since the death of the Austrian Crown Prince Rudolf in 1889 made his cousin Franz Ferdinand heir. Endless speculation on the causes of the tragedy has ensued, though it seems unlikely that anyone will ever be able materially to clear up the question of just how and why Rudolf and his mistress Marie Vetsera were shot at Mayerling. In the absence of any witness all conjectures are permissible, and M. Claude Anet's version is as good as another. It adds little or nothing to the known facts of the case, which have already been thoroughly investigated, but contents itself with telling in readable narrative style how it came about that the couple found themselves together at Mayerling the evening of

(*Continued on next page*)


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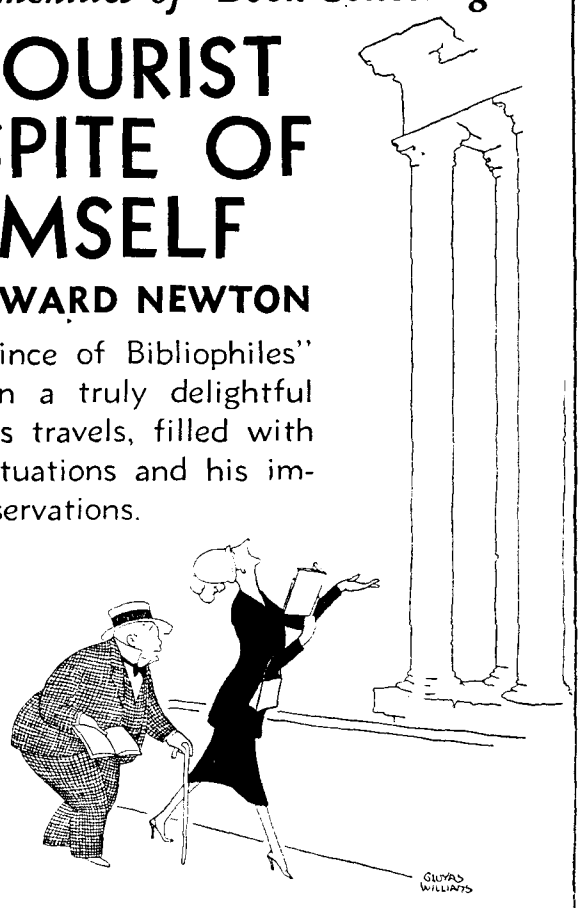


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# The New Books

## Fiction

(*Continued from preceding page*)

the tragedy. Beyond that M. Anet merely follows the accepted explanation that Rudolf after shooting Marie committed suicide. The most interesting field of speculation is concerned with *why* he felt it necessary to thus put an end to his life, since no great proof of Franz Josef's opposition to the clandestine romance exists. Into this, M. Anet's book scarcely attempts to penetrate, and consequently it can scarcely be said to have much importance save as attractively arranged reading matter, retelling a well known tale. The only person who might still throw light on the inner workings of the tragedy, Countess Larisch, is said to be living, an impoverished old woman, in New York. But it is more than likely that even she could not add much to the mysterious story.

THE FAMILY. By FRANÇOIS MAURIAC. Covici-Friede. 1930. $2.

Few French authors of his generation have been more fortunate in finding translators and publishers in America for their work than François Mauriac. At least five of his novels have already been offered in English versions, and now Mr. Lewis Galantière brings us his version of two more, united to form a single volume. "Le Baiser au Lepreux" was one of M. Mauriac's earlier and most successful works, with which the later "Génétrix" is closely associated. Together they helped materially to establish the author's reputation in France, and nothing that he has done since has been better received.

The matter of these two novels, which Mr. Galantière together calls "the Family," is more or less familiar. The close-knit provincial life characteristic of the Péloueyres has been studied by a good many authors both before and after M. Mauriac. The history of Jean Péloueyre, born a crippled hunchback and married to a saintly wife who must shudder inwardly and smile outwardly each time she sees him, is also not precisely novel. The wine-country atmosphere, with its heavily stressed peasant types, does not add to the lightness of the story, and its sequel is no more cheering. Yet in its solid, well documented way M. Mauriac's book sets out to describe these people and in the end makes the description believable. It is rather uphill work to read it all, perhaps, with the memory of so many stronger and more interesting peasant novels in one's mind, but still M. Mauriac should at the least have a prize for industry and perseverance in carrying on through two volumes with such characters. It is all rather more real than the author's later work, but none the less depressing. Perhaps one day M. Mauriac will yield to temptation and write about something less stereotyped than the saintly wives of hunchbacks.

THE WINGS OF ADVENTURE. By PHILIP GIBBS. Doubleday, Doran. 1930. $1.

Philip Gibbs has a happy and dynamic faculty of making the reader believe and feel with his characters until you lose sight entirely of the fact that it is merely a story that you are reading. This he has done especially well in "The Wings of Adventure," which is not a novel but a collection of ten long short stories or short novelettes, as you choose to consider them. Some of them are almost worth having made a full novel of; others are treated just about as they are worth; most of them are unusually interesting, dramatic, and full of the real people that Mr. Gibbs seems to get inside of so clearly.

Pity seems as always to be the keynote of most of the tales, and Mr. Gibbs in all of his work shows that quality of feeling for his characters more than most writers. You, too, will feel that tug at the heart when you read of the little provincial dancers who brave the long trip—for them—to England's fog and hardness in search of success; you, too, will strain in sympathy for the English lad whom a false sense of honor sends away from his English sweetheart and back to the girl in France; your own sympathies will soar with the wife who wants one more adventure, in the air, to salve her dulness; you, too, will feel the heart beats of the old English school teacher interned during the war and love her for the aid she tries to give the lads who are with her; your own youth will throb in memory when you hear of the two in a garret in Paris and how they lived and loved and almost died.

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE DAWN. By JOHN OXENHAM. Longmans, Green. 1930. $2.

This novelized version of the early years of Christianity—after the Crucifixion, but including some appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection—follows the New Testament story so closely and uncritically that one can only suppose it was intended to spread the gospel to persons constitutionally predisposed against Bible reading. The story is told by a young Roman resident in Jerusalem, and includes, besides the Scriptural characters, one or two residents of Nazareth. Suspense and drama are naturally lessened, for those who have read the Bible, by the fact that all the big climaxes are foreseen, and Mr. Oxenham's professional dexterity has not improved on the New Testament writers who were concerned simply with setting forth what they had to say. The description of Jesus emphasizes his friendly and cheerful aspects.

## History

THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST. Papers Read at a Conference Held at the University of Colorado, 1929. Edited by JAMES F. WILLARD and COLIN B. GOODYKOONTZ. Boulder: The University of Colorado. 1930.

This is much more than a routine record of the first regional conference on the history of the Far West, which when held a year ago last June at Boulder attracted wide attention. In the 350 pages of this volume are printed a dozen papers of genuine suggestiveness and value. Some of them present new facts, and some new ideas. Among the first group are Archer B. Hulbert's essay on Marcus Whitman, which shows conclusively that despite the long controversy which has raged about this missionary, some of the most important sources of information upon his career have never been explored; LeRoy Hafen's account of that extraordinary Mormon experiment, the sending of troops of emigrants across the great plains to Utah with nothing but hand-carts; Louis Pelzer's careful identification of the various trails of the trans-Mississippi cattle frontier; and perhaps most notable of all, Walter P. Webb's study of "The Great Plains and the Industrial Revolution." This somewhat unhappy title covers a remarkably interesting study of the rôle played in the development of the plains by the six-shooter, the barbed-wire fence, the well-drill and windmill, and the reaper. The author neglects the work done with the osage orange hedge by such prairie leaders as Jonathan B. Turner of Illinois, and his material on the six-shooter and barbed wire is largely familiar; but he has new data of value on the windmill, and he knits his whole body of information together in a stimulating way.

The essays of ideas are by no means of even merit. Percy H. Boynton and Lucy Hazard capably, but rather unoriginally, discuss Western literature, and Stanley Vestal offers his observations on the various Indian tribes of Oklahoma. Herbert E. Bolton, in a thoughtful and well-written paper, places the Spanish Southwest in its due relationship to the whole Hispanic effort of colonization in South and North America, and thereby gives to Spain the credit that is rightly hers. Eugene C. Baker pays his caustic respects to those writers who, under the spell of Whig tradition, systematically villify the men who were concerned in the conquest of California and the Southwest, though it is hard to see why he speaks highly of Josiah Royce, who perverted the story as badly as anyone. A regional conference so ably conducted as this should become a permanent institution.

## Juvenile

(*The Children's Bookshop will appear next week*)

STORIES POSTAGE STAMPS TELL. By SIGMUND I. ROTHSCHILD. Putnams. 1930. $3.50.

This book develops a somewhat interesting method of collecting stamps intended to emphasize the educational side of the hobby. Various pages of Mr. Rothschild's personal collection are illustrated and each chapter deals with one of the subjects thus pictured. Beginning with the letter "A" Mr. Rothschild takes us in chapters down through the alphabet from "Advertising" to "Zoology."

The style is as if Mr. Rothschild were personally conducting us through his collection and explaining each stamp, at times highly interesting and in places a little boring. The idea is good, but it is to be regretted that the re-writer did not use his blue pencil more strenuously. It is also unfortunate that so high a price for the volume was considered necessary (due no doubt to the forty-eight large half-tone illustrations), for the book is likely to be out of reach of the audience for which it is written.

(*Continued on page 168*)

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# The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquires in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, 2 Bramerton St., Chelsea S.W.3, London.

*L. G. W., Kalamazoo, Mich., and G. V. L., Brookline, Mass., are to write on "Teachers in Literature," and ask for titles of novels. The latter says: "There already occur to me such examples as Ichabod Crane, the village schoolmaster of Goldsmith, the schoolmaster in 'Villette,' and those in 'Tom Brown' and 'David Blaize'—and who publishes Clemence Dane's "Regiment of Women's? Of course, I intend to include Mr. Creakle and Mr. Mell; there must be others in Dickens. I am not after school and college backgrounds, but definite personalities."*

ONE who sets out to study teacher-types in Dickens finds them clustered at the two extremes: at one end, sadistic tyrants, frankly uneducated, like Squeers, Creakle, and Mrs. Pipchin, the child-tamer in "Dombey," at the other, mild anti-disciplinarians such as Mr. Mell and the schoolmaster in "Old Curiosity Shop," who are dismissed from their jobs but do well at a distance afterwards. With the latter might be included humble "minders" like Betty Higden and the smutty-faced slavey in one of the Christmas stories who spoilt her performance of Mesrour, when the children played harem, by saying, "Lawk, you pritties!" instead of "Bismillah." Educational systems are represented by the Blimber forcing-school—I have always wondered on what basis of fact the program of six-year-old Paul was constructed—the "hard facts" school satirized in "Hard Times," and the custom of farming out unwanted boys in what were then known as "Yorkshire schools." He seems not to have thought much of female education, even as conducted by the lovable Miss Twinkleton in "Drood"—who had "two distinct and separate phases of being," one for evening enjoyment of the tenderer scandals of the town, of which the other, scholastic state was ignorant as a granite pillar. The system was much the same in the establishment of the Miss Crumptons, of Hammersmith, from which Lavinia Brook-Dingwall eloped in "Sketches by Boz," or in that of the Wackles sisters, where the first love of Dick Swiveller was on the faculty. Dickens seems to use them less as objects of satire than as material for mild comic relief, and the teachers in them are in general sympathetically treated. The teacher that stands out most sharply in a Dickens novel, though, is the self-made, self-tortured Bradley Headstone in "Our Mutual Friend." He is real enough to use in a case-book, and I hope when he is it will be one of sociology as well as psychology.

Thackeray found girls' schools amusing, and took from one in Chiswick the renowned Miss Pinkerton of "Vanity Fair," whose habit of bestowing "Johnson's Dixonary" upon graduates gave Rebecca Sharp the chance of her first great gesture. Michael Angelo Titmarsh was once a drawing-master and wrote about characters in "Our School." The outstanding George Eliot teacher is Bartle Massey in "Adam Bede," through whom one gets not only a true teacher but a system and an influence.

The governess has a little literature of her own. Charlotte Brontë avenged her in "Jane Eyre" and the gentle Anne Brontë used some of her own experience in "Agnes Grey." Ruth Pinch in "Chuzzlewit" was a governess till she could stand it no longer. The only one I recall in Victorian literature who really had the best of it all the time was the one who ruled the country family in "The Book of Snobs" on the strength of her aristocratic connections; she was the one who thought Dante's surname was because he came from Algiers. In "The Newcomes" is a glimpse of two governesses, one Catholic, one Protestant, teaching English in French families, and expected to be dear little friends because they are both Irish. But they glare at each other across Boyne water. There was a vapid but popular Victorian romance called "Only a Governess," but the matrimonial prospects of the profession in fiction are now slim. In the Squire Clinton novels of Archibald Marshall the famous twins pet and terrorize their old governess, "Starling darling"; she appears with them in a special book made out of the novels, "Joan and Nancy" (Dodd, Mead). If I were specializing in this branch I could go on for some time, with Elizabeth's governesses, for example, in the "German Garden" and "Solitary Summer"; I wish I could put in the stalwart young person in Oliver Onions's "Grey Youth" (Doran), whose sole duty was to teach the twins to dance Rufty Tufty, but this valuable satire is out of print.

The custom of beginning a British fiction hero in the nursery and bearing down hard on his schooldays is responsible for the presence in contemporary novels of a great many masters of public and private schools. I would give most of them for those in Kipling's "Stalky and Company" (Doubleday, Doran). I must put in Alec Waugh's first novel, "The Loom of Youth," and how could I have left till as late as this Dr. Skinner in "The Way of All Flesh"? H. G. Wells is obsessed with educational reforms; a good beginning is in "Joan and Peter" (Macmillan). There is a girls' school, taken from life, in "Jane Eyre" and in "The Professor," and in each the teachers are fiercely alive. A. S. M. Hutchinson's new book, "The Golden Pound," is a set of exuberant stories taking place in a girls' school, a delightful work in the vein of his earlier writing, before he took to pounding the pulpit. Clemence Dane's "Regiment of Women" is published by Macmillan; it is one of the most important books for this list. Another fine study is in Eleanor Scott's "War among Ladies" (Little, Brown), an almost unbearably truthful transcript of life among English high-school teachers who must hang on somehow till their pensions fall due. A happier establishment figures in "Another Part of the Wood," by Denis Mackail (Houghton Mifflin), though the heroine does run away from St. Ethelburga's. From a less admirable school the master in Priestley's "The Good Companions" (Harper) ran away to join the pierrots. A drawing teacher and her brother play important parts in Sacheverell Sitwell's "The Gothick North" (Houghton Mifflin), and her school life is shown in retrospect. The fiction and the autobiography of Thomas Burke are haunted by brutal board-school teachers. No one who has read Barrie's "Sentimental Tommy" (Scribner) can forget the examination and the comments of the master whose laddie got the prize instead of the artistically conscientious Master Sandys.

Coming to America—which I have left till now because I have lately printed lists of our school and college novels—the high school is almost continuously under fire, and its teachers generally suffer in the bombardment. Look at the sordid high school life in "Oregon Detour," by Nard Jones (Brewer & Warren), or the dull one described in Lola Jean Simpson's "Treadmill" (Macmillan), or the bitter one in "Main Street"; see how the system's red tape is twitched in Mathilde Eiker's first—in some ways best—novel, "Mrs. Mason's Daughters" (Macmillan). Our fiction writers were once not so critical of our schools and their teachers: "Hoosier Schoolmaster" tried to bring sweetness and light to a crude community, the dominie in Mrs. Stowe's "Old Town Folks" (Houghton Mifflin) was a power in the community, and even when the boys barred out the master, as in Judge Longstreet's "Georgia Scenes," he had a square deal and a fighting chance with pupils and parents alike. This story, by the way, is preserved in "Golden Tales of Our America" (Dodd, Mead). Though Miss Alcott's "Jo's Boys" (Little, Brown) describes a dream-school, it uses some of the deplorably underestimated educational methods of her father.

Most of our books about kindergartens center around children rather than teachers, but the teacher is the focus of Myra Kelly's adorable "Little Citizens" (now in the Lambskin Library) and "Little Aliens" (Scribner) and in the stories of Kate Douglas Wiggin, while the disciplinary lapse of the teacher in Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Madness of Philip" will be applauded by many a harassed parent. Teachers in George Madden Martin's "Emmy Lou" (Doubleday, Doran) and "Emmy Lou's Road to Grace" (Appleton) must try to adapt the system to a "slow but sure" child—one of the most lovable in child-literature, by the way.

A novel by Clara Viebig has just been translated—"The Woman with a Thousand Children" (Appleton)—which gives an excellent idea of the life and routine of a Berlin teacher in a slum public school. There is an important study of the "maternal school" of Paris and a nurse-teacher who leaves the white-apron class of workers to wear a blue apron there, Frapie's "La Maternelle," which has also been made into a play given in Paris, but in neither form is it to be found in English.

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## The New Books
### Miscellaneous

(*Continued from page 166*)

BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND. By M. A. De Wolfe Howe. Harvard University Press. 1930. $2.50.

One of the old seaports of New England celebrates its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary this year. Its slaving, privateering, whaling, sea-trading days are over, and it now turns out rubber shoes and cup-defenders for a living. Its chief recreation is celebrating the glories of the past. Mr. Howe is a scion of the old stock who ceased to live in Bristol many years ago, but whose heart is true to Poll. Bristol has had her notable historian and annalist in Professor Munro of Brown. But for certain data drawn from some unpublished reminiscences by his father, Bishop Howe, this chronicler's little book is mainly a restatement and condensation of the familiar facts. For the rest it frankly stresses "local phenomena in which I lay some claim to an inherited or other direct interest."

In short, the writer's concern with Bristol is primarily the interest of a modern in the home of his ancestors. If it is "a study in mingled piety and worldliness," it is chiefly a study of those qualities as exhibited by one family connection, whose founder came to Bristol sixty years after the founding of the town. The general character of the place was already determined, and it may be that the newcomer gave to what became the ruling dynasty its name rather than its driving power.

For it was that wilful and canny old Yank, Sim Potter, who brought the first De Wolfe to Bristol from Guadaloupe, where Sim had touched on one of his half-piratical West Indian voyages. Sim brought him to Bristol and married him to his sister Abigail. The young husband never amounted to much, and it is amusing to surmise that he may have given hardly much more than a fresh label to the many sons of Abigail Potter who, you might say, carried on the aggressive Potter strain. But tradition has established a romantic regard for the ghost of young Marc Antony De Wolfe of Guadaloupe, while Cap'n Sim Potter is looked back on as a rather pesky village "character," and his sister Abigail as merely a producer of De Wolfes.

These questions of inheritance are always fascinating — and insoluble. They come often into Mr. Howe's engaging chronicle, a pleasant book to read and a comely book to put on the shelf. There are some excellent pictures of British Bristol houses and Bristol worthies.

MORNING LIGHT. By Frank B. Linderman. Day. 1930. $2.50.

This is the type of book which America has produced more frequently than any other country. A life story that goes by the somewhat awkward descriptive title of "fictionized biography," which means, of course, when the work is at its best, that we have the direct biographical approach presented with the sympathetic magic of fiction. In the case of "Morning Light," the blend of the two methods is rather more successfully achieved than in most cases.

It is the story of a fur trapper in the Northwest, when Montana was still open territory and the Hudson's Bay Company was the capitol of the fur trading adventure. The story of Lige Mounts is told in the first person and in something very close to the true regional dialect, rather closer, I suspect, than even Stanley Vestal has achieved. The fictionizing is confined rather to the method of presentation than to any manipulations of the circumstances and incidents of trapper life. The story throughout keeps very close to the norm of what every sincere student of the old West knows that life must have been. It is throughout so sincere and convincing in its picture of the interaction between human life and the land in which it is lived, that the return of Lige Mounts to the Indian country and his decision to throw in his lot with the tribesmen, rather than with the people of the middle western settlements which he had just revisited, is convincing and satisfying. We do not know that any other, better way of life or any better way of relating it, could be wished for, than one which makes this interpenetration of the man and his natural environment seem both soul satisfying and secure.

The book is especially recommended to those readers whose own teeth may have been set on edge a little by the sour grapes of oversophistication.

### Travel

The Purple Land. By *W. H. Hudson*. Dutton. $5.

Old Boston. By *Mary R. Lambert*. Houghton Mifflin. $2.50.

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### The Dollar Books

THE furore over the "new literature" which sells for a dollar a throw—or, in the drug stores for what you will—makes one curious as to what the books themselves look like. So it will be interesting to consider four of the new issues from the typographic point of view. It may be predicated that it costs no more to set good type than it does to set poor type, and costs no more to print it on paper. The cost of composition and presswork is relatively fixed; what affects the costs of a book are (aside from the length and complexity of copy) the paper, binding, and size of edition.

The four books before me at the moment are:

Inner Sanctum Novels: "Casanova's Homecoming," Simon & Schuster.
Blue Ribbon Books: "Mother India," Harcourt, Brace & Co.
Farrar & Rinehart: "Big Business Girl."
Doubleday, Doran & Co.: "Gringo."

Of these four books it is a bit surprising that "Casanova's Homecoming," while the smallest of the dollar ventures, looks the part better than the other three, which are of the traditional fat twelve-mo. novel size. Possibly this is because it resembles somewhat the long familiar Everyman series; possibly because it departs in binding very much from the stamped cloth of the others. It must be said that the three others look very much like Grosset & Dunlap reprints.

Typographically again, the Inner Sanctum book is the best looking, being set in a Bodoni type face of considerable legibility. The title-page is very good. The type page, on the other hand, is not very happily placed on the paper, and is not quite right in proportions. "Gringo" is set in that hoary Old Style No. 1 dear to the cheap novel trade, but not a good face; it should long ago have been thrown away. Furthermore, "Gringo" type-page is very bad in proportion and placing. The best looking page of the four is in "Mother India," perhaps because it is printed from plates of the earlier editions. It is a harmonious, well proportioned page.

Of paper not much can be said—at one dollar a book. The absurdity of attempting to make every book bulk the same as every other book is mournfully apparent in two of the books, and of course the paper has to be of the cheapest.

The bindings are of the sacrosanct stamped cloth, save for the Casanova volume. That is bound in flexible paper, with a good decorative cover design in blue. While a paper covered book, it will stand up on the shelf, and has all the symmetry of a full bound book. Altogether it is the most attractive of the four volumes: it looks as if someone had used imagination in its design.

### De Musset

FANTASIO, a Comedy in Two Acts. By Alfred de Musset. Translated by Maurice Baring. Paris: The Pleiad. 1929.

THIS is an exquisite printing of de Musset's comedy, a book to be cherished. Mr. Frederic Warde has designed it, and the Dutch firm of Enschedé has printed it in that delicate and lovely Lutetia type which was designed by J. van Krimpen. To give the book additional character and attractiveness, there are included twelve illustrations by Fernand Giauque, ten of them in lithography and two hand-colored. They are good pictures, skilfully done, and handled in such a way as to enhance the text. The only flaw I find with the book—and it is a serious mistake—is that the paper is printed the wrong way of the grain, causing the pages to buckle at the binding. Otherwise the book is a lovely piece of bookmaking. R.

### Emerson

NATURE. By Ralph Waldo Emerson. New York: Random House. 1929.

I WISH it were possible to be more enthusiastic over this book, which possesses all merits save that of attractiveness. The paper is hand-made, the type is very readable and large, the hand press work is flawless, the margins correct, the title-page vigorous. Yet the book needs some sort of typographical dressing up. It is too blunt. It has been printed by the Bremer Press, whose technical perfection none will question, but whose esthetic conception of the book does not seem equal to the printing excellence. R.

### Belated Notices

(I regret that notices of the following books received in the spring and summer have not appeared before. I hope that the opinions expressed will prove to have been mellowed by time.)

SELECTIONS FROM POE'S MARGINALIA. Pittsburgh: Laboratory Press. 1930.

POE'S "Marginalia" was published between 1844 and 1849 in various magazines, and has here been reprinted with titles and translations. The book has been set in Caslon type, with marginal notes in script, and some slight decoration, and printed on hand-made paper. The presswork is indeed exquisite: the clean, sharp impression, with the right amount of ink, is a joy. This is Project No. 100 of the Laboratory Press, done to celebrate the establishment, on April 7, 1923, of the Press.

HEARN AND HIS BIOGRAPHERS. The Record of a Literary Controversy. By Oscar Lewis. San Francisco: The Westgate Press. 1930. 350 copies. $15.

THAT Lafcadio Hearn was the son of an Irish father and a Greek mother was enough to prove, without the intermediation of any horoscope, that he was booked for a stormy career. And this storm reached its height immediately after his death, when three rival "biographers" raced to be the first in print! Two of them, Elizabeth Bisland Wetmore and Dr. George M. Gould, did, each, as much to harm Hearn's memory as they did to throw light on his life. The story of this extraordinary performance is told in this volume, with much detail and consideration for the facts and their interpretation. Preceding the narrative are half a dozen letters from Hearn to Joseph Tunison.

The manufacture of the book has been very well done indeed by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco. The book is set in Garamond type, and might have been better in only one particular: the extracts, which sometimes cover several pages, need more differentiation from the text. There are several reproductions of old letters, a *carte de visite* photograph, etc., faithfully rendered. The book is a credit to its printers and publishers, and will be necessary to all Hearn collectors.

ALIAS WALT WHITMAN. By Harvey O'Higgins. Newark: Carteret Book Club. 1930. 200 copies.

THE late Harvey O'Higgins prepared this essay for *Harpers Magazine*, where it appeared in May, 1929. This volume is a reprint in permanent form. If you are an admirer of Whitman you will swear at this book, and damn its author; while if, like the present writer, you have wondered why people have regarded an indifferent, egotistical poet to the point of idolatry, you will find the truth about him. The book is well printed at the Georgian Press, but should have had a more masculine binding. R.

### Literary Postmasters

I HAVE just received an announcement from the Oxford University Press of "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray. The text of the First Quarto, with the Variants of the MSS. and of the Early Editions," etc., etc., by Francis Griffin Stokes, *Sometime Postmaster of Merton College*. (The italics are Oxford's!) I confess that I don't know what particular position the Postmaster of Merton holds: he may, in the curious nomenclature of English collegiate life, play the same part as our

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college presidents—though he sounds more like a dean. But I hope he is a real postmaster, because when I read the announcement I immediately started to count up the literary postmasters of America. A postmaster is supposed to be a past master at letters, of course, but I was a bit surprised at the number which occurred to me at once.

Of course, any list of Eminent Americans in any walk of life or profession must begin with Benjamin Franklin. His avocations were numberless, but for the present purpose he was Postmaster General to the colonies, and he was a writer of some distinction; moreover, he was a printer, which again may or may not be a literary pursuit. But if one is a printer he gets so heartily sick of B. Franklin—even to suspecting that Franklin is the only American who is known to American printers before Mutt and Jeff came along—that he becomes a bore.

And of course there was Louise Imogen Guiney, postmistress at Auburndale, daughter of an Irish soldier in our Civil War; and poet whose equal has not, I think, appeared among us since. There are not many books of verse so full of fine poetry as "Happy Ending"—nor many so fortunate in their printer. "Would *she* had not borne away Ardor *hers* and ours," though the precious record of that ardor is one of America's few poetic treasures. But Miss Guiney was *sui generis*; my other portraits of literary postmasters descend from the sublime to the nonsensical.

There was the Reverend Petroleum Vesuvius (née Volcano) Nasby, sometime Pastor of the Church of the New Dispensation at Confederate X Roads, Kentucky, later postmaster under President Andrew Johnson. No addict of the comic strip has ever heard of Nasby, but he was highly esteemed as a humorist by Lowell, and he was one of the progenitors of Bud Fisher and his ilk.

But my favorite literary postmaster was he of whom a cynical friend (antedating the "Spoon River Anthology" with an "Alphabet" of the town's living worthies) wrote:

*S is for Simon, poetaster,*
*Deserving Democrat, postmaster.*
*So Byron limped; could Byron write*
*The "Potock Isle" of our delight?*

For the fact is that Simon had written in verse form a comic opera of most alarming sort, entitled "The King of Potock Isle," which, so far as I know, is still in manuscript form only.

Well, the Postmaster of Merton's book may be good or bad: I haven't even seen it. And it has been truthfully said that if the reviewer doesn't read a book he can't be prejudiced. Furthermore, I wasn't even asked to review the book—or the announcement. I was simply intrigued by the fact that a postmaster had written a book which so good a publisher as Oxford would accept and print. R.

## A Letter from Goldsmith

Among a number of manuscripts recently acquired by the British Museum is the well-known letter from Oliver Goldsmith, written to his brother Maurice, in which he refers with a touch of bitterness to his appointment to a professorship at the Royal Academy. It was written in 1770, apparently just before the publication of "The Deserted Village." Goldsmith had already established his reputation, but had found, like many another genius before and since, that his means did not increase with his fame. He laments his inability to help his poor relatives, and adds: "The King has been lately pleased to make me Professor of ancient history in a Royal Academy of Painting which he has just established, but there is no sallary anex'd and I took it rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honors to one in my situation are something like ruffles to a man that wants a shirt."

## Irving and Darley

RIP VAN WINKLE. By WASHINGTON IRVING. With an introduction by MARK VAN DOREN. New York: Limited Editions Club. 1930.

A NEW edition of Rip Van Winkle needs some justification, for it has been reprinted about as often and in as many ways as any other American story. The justification in this present issue is two-fold—and the two parts, excellent in themselves, are none too harmonious when brought together. For Mr. Goudy's type is not exactly in the spirit of Felix Darley's pictures!

The volume has been designed by Mr. Goudy, and for it he has designed a new type, named, by reason of its use in this volume, "Kaatskill." It is a good type, legible and skilfully made, but not, to our thinking, so good as Deepdene. A good, toned, wove paper has been used. The binding, in green leather, with the title in capitals on the backbone, is simple and severe.

What distinguishes the volume most is the reproduction of six drawings for the story, from engravings by Felix Darley, made, if we are not mistaken, somewhere about the middle of the nineteenth century. These pictures are exquisite in drawing, delightfully *en rapport* the spirit of the story and of Irving's humor. Darley was a man of very great ability and a good craftsman, and it is delightful to have these pictures brought to light and reproduced. For they have this great merit, that they *do* illustrate the story—and they are well drawn. The only regret is that they could not have been used with a type more appropriate to the delicacy. R.

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The American Art Association-Anderson Galleries has announced a tentative schedule of sales for October: October 10-11: Selections from the stock of William Baumgarten Company. Antique furniture and furnishings. October 13-15: John Nolty Library. Manuscripts, first editions, colored plate and sporting books. October 16-17-18: John R. Herter Collection. French and Italian furniture and decorations. October 20: Autograph sale. English and American autographs, including Signers of the Declaration of Independence, Presidents of the United States, and others. October 22: Kalisch Collection. Library sets of standard authors. October 23-24-25: Furniture and furnishings from various sources. October 27: Book sale. Rare first editions, colored plate and sporting books. October 31-November 1: M. D. Benzaria. Antique Spanish furniture, Persian and Spanish objects of art. It is also stated that the library of Frederick W. Lehman, of St. Louis, will be sold in December—this collection includes first editions of American authors, and many rarities.

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*from* THE INNER SANCTUM *of*
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GEOFFREY DENNIS, *author of* THE END OF THE WORLD.

*Moby Dick*, *Leaves of Grass*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Of Human Bondage* were once manuscripts confronted and appraised by that aide-de-camp of literary immortality, the Publisher's First Reader.

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Certainly the system is vindicated in the case of this new book by GEOFFREY DENNIS: *The End of the World*. The *dossier* on this particular manuscript reveals reports like this from *The First Reader* and from *the advisory editors:*

> GEOFFREY DENNIS *has published two novels which in my opinion are masterpieces,* MARY LEE *and* HARVEST IN POLAND. *His spirit is akin to that of* MELVILLE, *of* JEFFERS, *of* POE, *of the Author of* REVELATIONS *and the* BOOK OF THE APOCALPYSE. *That is why he has never had any audience in his own day. But he will be read by some future generation*
>
> *Now comes this gorgeous and magnificent book* THE END OF THE WORLD. *It is undescribable—a prose masterpiece in the sense that Hydriotaphia by* SIR THOMAS BROWNE *is one: in other words it is caviare to the general.*
>
> *It is a synthesis of the guesses of science and the prophecies of the post-Einsteinians: it is a furious attempt to envision the end which shall surely come, an attempt to chart the* HOW *of that end [by Comet, by Fire, by Water, by Drought, by Cold, by Crash, by God] the* WHEN *of that End [this year, next year, some time, never], the* MANNER *of that End [which first, man or earth?]—and* WHAT AFTERWARD—*this last a metaphysical leap into the darkness which ends in a silent crash of Nirvanic negation.*

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With these aesthetic rhapsodies and commercial misgivings, the manuscript came to the *Inner Sanctum*. It was read at once, and reported on as follows:

"*To read* THE END OF THE WORLD *is almost a Copernican experience. We* MUST *publish it.* GEOFFREY DENNIS *seems to occupy some lofty vantage point in space, from which he can, with brushes of comet's hair, sit before a ten-league canvas and portray the unportrayable. Not since I read* A FREE MAN'S WORSHIP *by* BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Captain Ahab's mad whale-hunt in* MOBY DICK, *and parts of* THE UNIVERSE AROUND US *by* JEANS *have I been so moved and stimulated.*"

That is why *The End of the World* is published today by

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# THE PHOENIX NEST

THEY all appear in the *Saturday Evening Post* nowadays! *Gilbert Seldes* has been proving in it that the United States never had the right to a Lost Generation, and *Julian Street* has been patting the late *John Reed* on the head. Safety and Saneness Forever, hurrah for the Red, White, and Blue! . . .

That may all be so, you know. *The Saturday Evening Post* may be the great conserver of American morals and the Union Club may be Man's highest ambition. Somehow, we don't believe it. . . .

Fair Harvard, some of thy sons that to thy Jubilee might throng interest us strangely, although we ourself came from New Haven. There was an old fogey, for instance, named *James Russell Lowell*, who wrote verse in New England dialect, and in it remarked from a cracker barrel, "Ez fer War, I call it Murder," and clinched it by saying that he didn't have to go "no furder than my Testyment fer that." Imagine saying such an outrageous thing in time of war! And yet we believe that *Hosea Biglow* will outlast all Commemoration Odes. And somehow we believe that the names of Harvard men like *John Reed, Heywood Broun, John Dos Passos* will in a century or so continue to shine quite as brightly as those of their more conventional though perhaps equally cultivated brethren. This is no longer the country of much independent opinion, but it is as well to hang on to as much as we have got and to try to remember that independence was our original heritage. . . .

It is of no more importance, as a matter of fact, that John Reed went to Harvard than that *Shelley* went to Oxford. Not that John Reed as a poet should be mentioned in the same breath with Shelley, but John Reed as a human spirit may—even though the two young men—and both died young—were so dissimilar in many characteristics. They were not very dissimilar in their sympathies. As to their literary capacities, John Reed was no genius, he was merely an inspired reporter (which is not necessarily to say an accurate reporter, but an intensely exciting one.) But of what importance is it that he came of "a sound and cultured American family"? The important thing is that he was a poet at all. The important thing is most certainly not that he wrote a Hasty Pudding Show or a show for the Dutch Treat Club, but that he brought among ordinary men a flicker of that superhuman energy that we associate with genius. We are not calling him a genius. But we knew him briefly, as a poet, years ago, and he was what *Edwin Arlington Robinson* has called the born poet, "a freak of nature." And that in its most complimentary sense. Mr. Street says:

> For it would be difficult, I should think, even for John Reed's most extravagant admirers, to deny that a country governed by the John Reeds of this world would be a fantastic and terrible place.

Possibly. Except that this should be qualified by the realization that society as at present organized is pretty fantastic and terrible. Reed had quick sympathies, rebellion, romantic humor, courage. Says Mr. Street, "To glorify his service to the Soviets is to glorify his disloyalty to the land of his birth." But it is just possible that Reed had conceived of a larger loyalty, as so many of these crazy poets do—a loyalty to the human race. . . .

Well, if the Soviets are at present making Reed out a saint he must, from another existence, be bursting with laughter at them, if there is another existence. He was most certainly no saint. And *of course* he did reckless things, foolish things, troubled his friends. It is true that he was a self-dramatizer—like most of us—only he enjoyed its expression. But to indicate, as Mr. Street does in the last line of his article, that Reed remained to the end merely a playboy throwing snowballs, is to do him—to put it mildly—less than justice. Of all the radicals we have known, and we have known as many as the next man, he was the only one who would actually risk his own neck at the drop of the hat. He began, perhaps, by constituting himself, for the fun of it, the gadfly of society. He ended by being something far greater. We did not go his road. We are quite differently constituted. We wrote a poem once, however, which expresses the way we feel about Reed. Here is the last verse of it:

*So for his day he held the rostrum—*
*Electric messenger to Earth!*
*And eyes were rubbed and heart-beats heightened.*
*The town awoke. The town was frightened.*
*They'll sleep again in half a lustrum—*
*But, 'ware the wonder-birth!*

Still, what's the use of printing our own poetry when we have a brace of fine verses simply handed over to us gratis by that stout admirer of Milton, Walton, and Stilton, *viz.: Leonard Bacon*, who has just surged in from the Mackenzie River with tall tales of trout. Just prior to this the *Saturday Review's* publisher, *Noble Cathcart*, had returned from the Klamath with hosannas about shooting the rapids. The Red Gods called to them,—and did they go! Gosh, how effete we feel. Which reminds us suddenly, that, by gad, Kipling's "The Feet of the Young Men" is obviously one of the best of all his poems, and yet, so far as we know, none of our leading anthologists has ever chosen it. Well, here is Mr. Bacon's statement:

*The rainbow trout is gamer,*
*But the Dolly Varden's faster.*
*And although the sport is tamer,*
*With the spinner I'm a master.*
*Despite my inhibitions*
*And the creature's furious flounder*
*Under terrible conditions*
*I took a fine four-pounder.*

*When I saw the rod bend double*
*And the line go down and under,*
*I knew there would be trouble,*
*But I got the beast, by thunder.*
*All rose and iris-spotted,*
*A radiant prey we netted,*
*And with moonshine double-shotted*
*Our burning whistles wetted. . . .*

This fall *Joseph T. Shipley* is giving a course in literary criticism at the Twenty-third Street Building of the City College on Tuesdays from four to six. It will be a rapid survey of the history of literary criticism, then a detailed consideration of the technique of poetry, the drama, and the novel, with emphasis on contemporary points of view and the opportunity for critical writing. . . .

Again, introducing Homer M. Parsons in an act entitled "Shakespeare and the New Humanism":

*"Tired with all these," quoth Shakespeare,*
*"let me die."*
*A nosegay then of canker's blooms he noted:*
*Virtue turned strumpet, strength that limped awry,*
*And other nine examples might be quoted.*
*Right in their midst—here, Irving Babbitt, look!*
*And you, Paul Elmer More!—see this: "And art*
*Made tongue-tied by authority." What hook*
*Will ye employ to tear the bard apart?*
*Authority? To hell with it, cried Will.*
*Where art's adventure, tutelage stays home.*
*It's "captive good" again, and "captain ill."*
*But wisdom drinks, while folly blows the foam.*
*Yet, if the classic masters take the tricks,*
*Read 'em and weep! It's Sonnet LXVI.*

And that's that: Shakespeare himself, not something put in Hamlet's mouth to prove him crazy. It is clear and understandable, without need of an oblique footnote by T. S. Eliot pointing its fancied connection to something by St. Augustine out of Sappho or quoting some medical authority on the shortness of the frænum. Abjuring authority he denies Humanism; which, by the logic of a Seward Collins syllogism, makes him a Communist.

I tell you, Mr. Phœnician, it's serious. If that young upstart from Stratford doesn't curb his impudence, his books will be banned in this country.

But having blown the foam, let's drink to ooooese Rag shakespeheriano and set our Selah down in the orthodox Humanist manner thus:

Shantih shantih shantih.

THE PHOENICIAN.

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# Points of View

## Again Chaucer Translated

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
SIR:

When I read the letter from Mr. Donald A. Roberts which appeared in the *Saturday Review* for July 5, his point of view struck me as so unusual that I wanted to ask that it be more fully set out, but I postponed the attempt to give form to my impressions until I had done what Mr. Roberts says he did not do; *i. e.*, had read Mr. Hill's translation of Chaucer into modern English. Another of your correspondents has in the meanwhile made comments which cover some of the points that I had in mind, but the subject is important and justifies, I think, further examination.

Mr. Roberts's contention, if I get it correctly, is that any attempt to translate Chaucer is an impertinence, since anyone who is not able to read the text with facility must be so far sunk in ignorance and sloth that it is worse than useless to try to convey to him even imperfectly the quality of the original. I have no doubt that in translating Chaucer, as in translating almost any great author, there is a vast loss, no matter how well the translation may be done, so that one able freely to read the original has a tremendous advantage over one whose acquaintance with the author can be only second-hand. What I wish Mr. Roberts would explain, however, is just where he would draw the line.

It is not, surely, a criminal offence to translate Homer, Dante, or Goethe, imperfect as the results must inevitably be. It is a misfortune not to have such a command of Greek, Italian, and German as to render the mediation of a translator needless. Nevertheless, I have never heard it suggested that the attempt to translate these authors was therefore to be condemned or that a person who found such translations useful was necessarily to be deemed a "shallow culture seeker" or hopelessly lacking in the qualities essential to the understanding and appreciation of their work.

Exactly what is it, therefore, which puts Chaucer in a class by himself, so that it is high treason to try to make him accessible to those who have not been able to make a serious study of Middle English,—a class which includes not only the uneducated, but practically all the educated as well, except for a small group of specialists? I think it would generally be agreed that one who, like myself, never passed in attacking Homer beyond the stage of digging out the sense with grammar and lexicon would be likely to get a good deal more of the real Homeric spirit out of a competent translation, though he would lose at best a great deal that would lie open to a first-class Greek scholar. So, as to Chaucer, it is hard to see why a translation, if it is a good one, may not bring the reader who is not specially trained much closer to the author than he could get by laboriously struggling with the original. Of course, the qualification,—"if it is a good one,"—cannot be overlooked. As I cannot pretend to any accurate knowledge of Middle English, it is not of much significance that I felt that I was getting through Mr. Hill's translation more of Chaucer than I had ever been able to attain through worrying with the text. That, however, is immaterial for the present purpose. Mr. Roberts's objection is not to anything peculiar to Mr. Hill's translation but to the idea of translating Chaucer at all and it is as to what he assumes to be a fundamental difference in this respect between Chaucer and other authors that I wish he would enlighten us.

HAROLD S. DAVIS.

Boston.

## A Sinclair Bibliography

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

Readers of foreign languages may be interested to know that I have compiled a bibliography of foreign editions and translations of my books. The pamphlet records a total of 525 titles in thirty-four countries. As there have been many unauthorized editions, and as information from the more remote countries is difficult to obtain, I will be glad to have additions and corrections from anyone. The bibliography will be kept up-to-date, and reissued at intervals. A copy will be sent free to booksellers, librarians, and any others who may have use for it.

UPTON SINCLAIR.

Station A, Pasadena, California.

## Mr. Viereck Replies

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:
Sir:

Mr. John Bakeless, in his review of my book "Spreading Germs of Hate," accuses me of not documenting my statements and points out what he considers "shocking errors" of fact.

It may be that it was *World's Work* and not the New York *World* which discovered that John R. Rathom was a faker. In citing the New York *World* I was misled by a popular book of reference published shortly after the war, but I fail to see how that affects the value of my statement. The important thing is not whether it was the *World* or *World's Work* that made the discovery, but the fact that Mr. Rathom was discredited.

Again, he points out that Bolo Pasha was not hanged but shot. To me that distinction seems academic. It does not involve the essence of my argument, which has nothing to do with the manner of his execution.

Your reviewer states that the list of Americans in high office who were decorated by the Allies takes on a different light when one realizes that most of them were decorated after America entered the war. He does not deny that some of them were decorated before that event. In any case, my argument that decorations were used by the propagandists of various nations to further their cause, remains unaffected.

The question whether Admiral Lord Fisher sent his letter to von Tirpitz or whether it was never sent is of no importance whatsoever. The interest in the letter is psychological. No one cares whether it was delivered to the addressee by due process of mail.

Mr. Bakeless states that the Lusitania medal was "dated" two days ahead of the actual fatality. By this statement he surreptitiously attempts to convey the infamous falsehood that the Germans knew of the sinking beforehand and deliberately proceeded to coin a medal to celebrate the occasion. I do not know how the medal was dated, but I do know that no such medal was coined or prepared before the event. For further information I refer Mr. Bakeless to Ponsonby's "Falsehood in Wartime," and other source books.

I fail to see how my argument as to what would happen in case of a war between the United States and the moon is in any way impaired by the fact that I speak of a lunar moth, whereas my critic insists that the species is called *actias luna*, although he admits that in popular parlance one sometimes speaks of it as the luna moth. I am afraid Mr. Bakeless cannot see a joke.

I do not know whether the statement on submarines appeared in the *Revue Militaire* or in the *Review Maritime*. I am indebted for the statement as well as the source to an article by Admiral von Mantey. Mr. Bakeless does not challenge the authenticity of the quotation, and all his hair-splitting cannot conceal the fact that the approval of submarine warfare was printed with the consent of the French naval authorities and that it expresses their point of view.

Finally, Mr. Bakeless assails me for not stating that Dr. Vernon Kellogg was actually living at German Headquarters. Nobody cares a rap where Dr. Kelogg lived. I am merely concerned in pointing out the absurdity of the hysterical statements by otherwise sane men, under the influence of war psychosis. Your reviewer says that Dr. Kellogg "has as much right" to his opinion as I have. From this I conclude that Mr. Bakeless endorses Dr. Kellogg's statement, to wit:

> Will it be any wonder if, after the War, the people of the world, when they recognize any human being as a German, will shrink aside so that they may not touch him as he passes, or stoop for stones to drive him from their path? This will be cruel to the few who are not diseased, but it will be warranted precaution against the danger—most of the Germans in Germany, and some outside of it, have become unclean and will have to walk the world as a marked people, avoided, despised, stoned. . . . Though it be war time or peace time, for a long time "German" and "made in Germany" are going to be equivalent, both as regards persons and things, to "unclean, unclean!"

Mr. Kellogg himself, I feel quite sure, is heartily ashamed today of his preposterous utterance. The fact that Mr. Bakeless condones the statement today clearly reveals that he is still under the influence of those pathological conditions which poisoned men's minds during the war. It also reveals why he picks out a few picayune errors, which in no way invalidate my message, to discredit my book.

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK.

New York.


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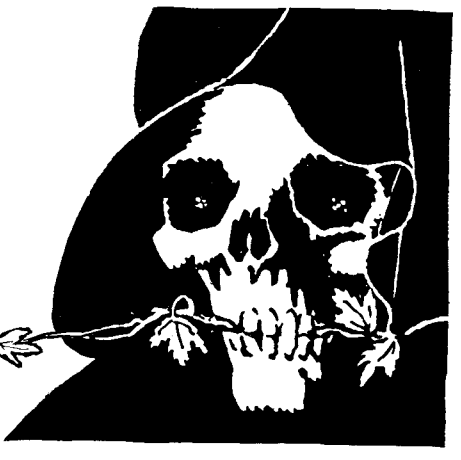

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